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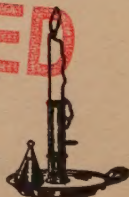
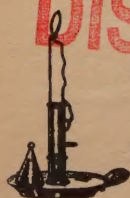
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**STEPHENS COLLEGE,
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SPINDRIFT

"The froth and
spray cast off by
life and blown away
—to nothing."

OTHER PUBLISHED PLAYS

By MR. FLAVIN

CHILDREN OF THE MOON

LADY OF THE ROSE

SERVICE FOR TWO

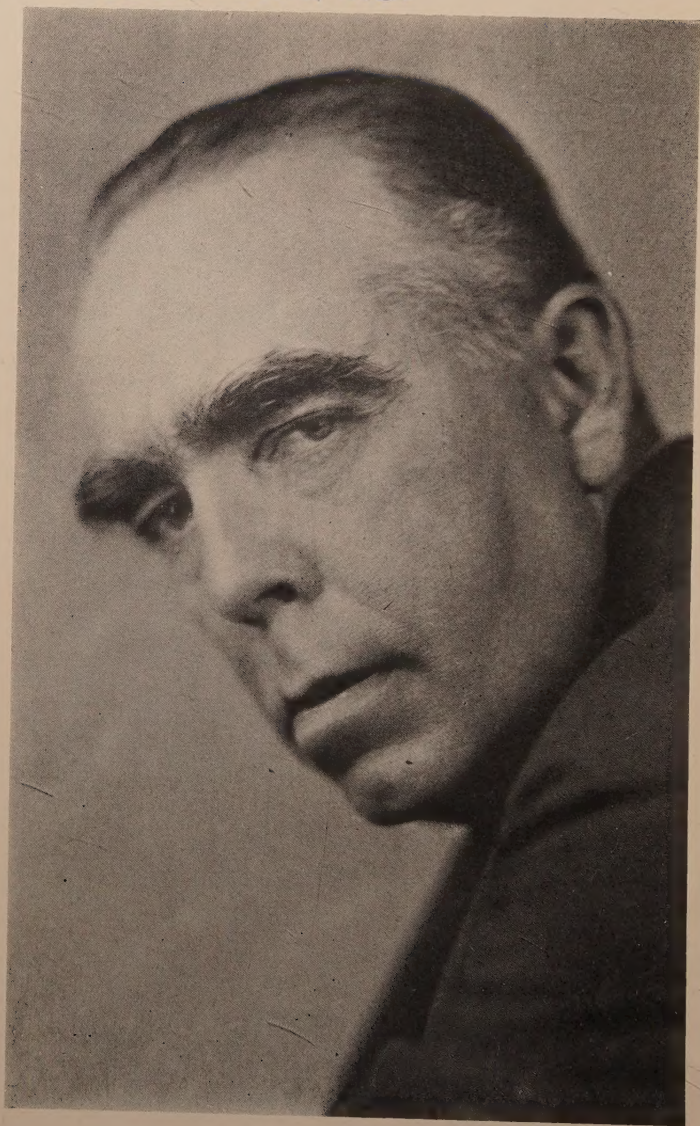
THE CRIMINAL CODE

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CROSS ROADS

BRAINS AND OTHER PLAYS

STEPHENS COLLEGE,
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STEPHENS COLLEGE,
COLUMBIA, MO.

SPINDRIFT

A Comedy

BY
MARTIN FLAVIN

PREFACE BY
BARRETT H. CLARK



SAMUEL FRENCH

Thos. R. Edwards Managing Director
NEW YORK LOS ANGELES

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To
“SPINDRIFT”

Instead of a Preface

Dear Martin:

It would be foolish of me to tell you in public, as though I were an after-dinner speaker and you a guest of honor, that your play is an imperishable masterpiece and yourself an American Ibsen. I shan't waste paper and ink by over-praising you to your face or telling your readers how much they will find in *Spindrift* to repay an hour's reading—as they will. I am using your play as an excuse to tell you a few things about yourself and your work that you may not know; or if this isn't necessary, then let us both consider my open letter what it really is, a transparent literary pretence, deceptive in appearance, maybe, but fraudulent in purpose.

You are one of the younger men, in spite of the date in *Who's Who* and the unimportant fact that you happened to be born some years before I was.

You are a contemporary of mine and of that newer generation of playwrights who are today making an American drama. Like them you are restless and apparently unable to stick to any one style of play that you could go on turning out regularly to the satisfaction of hardheaded managers and indiscriminating theatergoers. You are one of those irritating writers whose latest play is just as likely to be a "flop" as a "wow." You should know better, because you have had years of business experience and I don't doubt that

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in your office you were highly successful. You went into business at a time when your playwriting contemporaries refused to go into business, and at an age when I'd imagine any man would have the sense to remain in business you got out and proceeded to write what I think is your first play, *Children of the Moon*. Anyway it was the first to reach the stage. Surely you wrote that piece to please yourself, because it's not the kind of thing you would suppose had the ghost of a chance on Broadway; and yet the intensity of the mood you created and the suave skill of your hand put it over. I respect that play and in a way I admire it, but I must add that it is not a favorite of mine. After I read it for the first time I wondered how old you were and whether you had done anything else. Perhaps, like so many others, you were only a one-play-man? Luckily you weren't, and I soon learned that you had pretty well mastered the trickery of making one-acters, at best a minor feat but a pretty one. Somber they were, pleasantly sceptical in idea, and grim. But not all of them, for I soon found that (as in *A Question of Principle*) you could smile, and you could also make a melodrama look like something "artistic"—as in *Brains*. But the half dozen short plays you have allowed to get into print I must now, in the light of your later work, regard as mere by-products.

Lady of the Rose, your next long play, failed on Broadway. It was not so clever as *Children of the Moon*, but there was more life in it and a reassuring evidence of your desire to show us men and women in moments of unusual emotional stress.

Like many of your fellow-workers, you were anx-

ious to broaden the field of your art, and while you had no objection to making money you were determined not to use the theater just as a means to create effects. What appealed to you was the opportunity to compress within the limits of a box set something of the life about you that seemed worth recording. After the failure of *Lady of the Rose* you turned for relief to sophisticated farce and you succeeded in handling a difficult form with notable skill. *Service for Two* was a slick job, entertaining, neat, and utterly gay. Here again was a play that failed to do much business, but I am sure you don't regret having written it.

Meantime, I don't know just when, you had written *The Road to the City*, which was never publicly acted. I suppose I'd find it old-fashioned now, but it had a note of passion in it that appealed to me.

Before the last theater season opened you must have been something of a puzzle to critics and others of us who had been watching your development: were you a man who would carry on, or were you written out? During the next few months that question was answered, and for a time you were the big theatrical news of the season. Three plays on Broadway at once! Casual playgoers looking for something to go to wondered which of the three Flavin plays they should buy seats for! *The Criminal Code*—rather highbrow, talked of as a Pulitzer Prize winner; *Cross Roads*—a mixture of highbrow and lowbrow; *Broken Dishes*—a pleasant evening in the theater. This must have been gratifying to you, but so far as I can see, you regarded this material success more as an opportunity for new endeavors than a reward for past services.

You had not been idle: besides these three plays, you had *Spindrift* ready for some good producer in case he wanted it, and you were at work on *Dancing Days*, which is something of a departure, but not different enough from the work of other playwrights to convince me that it marks a distinct advance over what you'd already done, considering that *you* wrote it. And you may have other scripts up your sleeve. We'll know in good time.

Weren't you satisfied with having three plays on Broadway at once? Couldn't you write another *Criminal Code* or repeat the success of *Broken Dishes*? Surely, but instead, you naturally looked about for someone on Broadway to produce a certain play that you happened to like, more ambitious in intention and more subtle in execution than anything else you had ever written.

Spindrift had been offered to several managers before, during and after your last year's successes. (I'm not betraying any professional secrets, am I?) and you thought it good stuff. It is. Strange, wasn't it, that no manager of standing in New York would take a chance on *any* new Flavin play? Surely some intelligent producer might have risked a hundred dollars' advance? What was wrong? Was *Spindrift* a weaker play than any of the three that ran in New York last year? Certainly not. It was good, but what was the trouble? To give you a complete answer, I should have to write an essay on what's wrong with our theater. The managers doubtless felt that this sincere play would not make money. Several of them said so. A fine excuse indeed! Why should anyone be in the theater business in order

to make money? To hear insiders talk you would imagine it was the last place in the world where anyone could make a living. Why then do we still have theatrical producers? Obviously because they are interested in the theater. In having a good unproduced play on your hands last year you found yourself in excellent company with another American playwright whose fame has extended farther than your own. Curiously enough, O'Neill's one unproduced play, *Lazarus Laughed*, was first offered to the public through the Pasadena Community Playhouse where your unproduced *Spindrift* was also done a couple of seasons later. Whatever Gilmor Brown's ultimate motive may have been in producing these two plays, I am grateful to him for seeing the light.

If the little theaters knew what they were about they would be the first to bid for the unproduced plays of our new playwrights and not lag behind, as practically every one of them does. I hope a day will come when you or O'Neill or anyone else who takes it into his head to experiment with form or subject matter will turn first to the unpretentious experimental playhouses and bring his plays last, not first, to Broadway.

Meantime let us offer your play to those who had not the chance to see it on the stage. I present it with my recommendation not only to the producers on Broadway but to the little theaters throughout the country, with the assurance that it is good work even though it doesn't carry the official stamp of metropolitan approval.

BARRETT H. CLARK

"SPINDRIFT" was first produced at the Pasadena Community Theatre on March 23, 1930, with the following cast:

MARIANA.....	<i>Lisa Thompson</i>
MR. WATTS.....	<i>Eugene J. Sharkey</i>
MILDRED DOREMY.....	<i>Martha Dean</i>
PETER DOREMY.....	<i>Joseph Sauers</i>
YOUNG PETER.....	<i>Robert Young</i>
FRANCIS DOREMY.....	<i>Stuart Buchanan</i>
ELLEN WITBECK.....	<i>Tirzah Daines</i>
MR. WITBECK.....	<i>Charles Levison</i>
KONRAD BRANDES.....	<i>Gilmor Brown</i>
BUNNY.....	<i>Gypsy O'Brien</i>
BOOTS.....	<i>Esther Saenger</i>
MR. PAYNE.....	<i>James Hawks</i>
MRS. PAYNE.....	<i>Blanche Phillips Coolidge</i>

The action of the play, which is divided into three acts, takes place in the garden and home of Peter Doremy.

There is an interval of several weeks between the first and second acts, and of several hours between the second and third.

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ACT ONE

ACT ONE¹

At the back a rough stone wall some six or seven feet in height, and curving forward at the ends to form a sort of amphitheatre, slopes back gracefully against an earthen terrace which is level with its top. The interstices of the rocks are filled with ferns and wild flowers, and the terrace above is edged with dwarfed and wind blown cypress trees whose twisted branches descend here and there over the coping of the wall. At the right a tall stone chimney is visible above the trees and beyond it a bit of roof with Spanish tiles. On this side there is an opening in the wall whence a path leads through a garden to the house. Below this entrance and close to the wall are a porch swing with a canopy and a rustic chair. On the left directly opposite is a small round table with two similar chairs. Above it is an out door grill built into the wall and with a stone chimney which extends a bit above the terrace. Still further back some steps ascend in the wall to a cup-like depression in the terrace. There is here a little clearing in the trees, an easel, an umbrella to shade it, and an unobstructed view to the left of the sea. From this point one may turn to the right and pass along the terrace behind the trees to the house, or one may turn to the left and

¹ *All stage directions are from the left and right of the audience.*

descend a winding path to the shore. In the center a long stone bench is built into the wall, and in front of it, paralleling the wall, is an equally long and very massive table with a top of rough redwood planks, and stone supports. On the near side a wood bench extends the length of it, and there are rustic stools at either end. An iron bracket extending from the top of the wall supports an old ship lantern over the center of the table.

It is late afternoon and there is already a suggestion of sunset color in the sky.

On the terrace PETER DOREMY is painting a picture of the sea. He is a thickset, powerful looking man of fifty, with a nervous, irritable disposition screened by a studied manner of repression and reserve so that he appears vague, embarrassed, even timid. He wears a wool shirt open at the neck, and paint-stained breeches of corduroy. He is hatless and his dark hair, graying at the temples, is disheveled. He stands before the easel absorbed in his occupation, now and again stepping back to squint at the canvas and to ponder his subject.

MARIANA, a plump, good-natured, comely Portuguese girl with rosy cheeks and fine black hair, is setting the long table, singing softly to herself as she does so.

MR. WATTS, in the garb of a stone mason with a canvas satchel of tools in one hand and a trowel in the other, backs into view from the right. He is a middle-aged man with a narrow, leathery face, a drawling voice, and a quizzical twinkle in his eye. He comes to a halt in the center, his eyes on the chimney visible above the trees; and he drops his satchel with a great crash whereat PETER starts terribly, dropping a brush, and turning to glare with muttered imprecations.

MR. WATTS. [*To no one in particular with an air of satisfaction.*] There she is.—Straight as an arrow.—I guess that chimney'll stand till Judgment Day—more or less.

MARIANA. [*Laughing derisively.*] Ho—ho!

MR. WATTS. Well it may not be long till Judgment Day, Mariana. [*And he chuckles to himself.*]

MARIANA. A little earthquake could shake it down.

MR. WATTS. [*Reflecting amiably.*] Well, sir, now I guess that's right. I guess maybe it could.

MARIANA. One like there was ten years ago.

MR. WATTS. My! that was a twister, wasn't it? [*Cheerfully.*] Why I been making repairs ever since. But that's life, Mariana; knock 'em down and build 'em up again,—knock 'em down and build 'em up. That's the way she goes—yes, sir—well, it's an ill wind— [*He chuckles and, sitting down on the bench, begins to pull off his overalls.*]

MARIANA. Are you finished now?

MR. WATTS. Well I'm finished with that chimney, but a stone mason ain't ever *finished* at Spindrift, Mariana. You know that.

MARIANA. [*Laughing.*] I'll say.

MR. WATTS. Mrs. Doremy'll study up something new before a great while. It may be a piece of wall or a bit of terrace or a bench or an arch or something. And if she can't think of nothing new, we'll tear down something old and build it up again. [*He sighs whimsically*

and pulls one leg from the overalls. MARIANA resumes her work and her singing. He listens for a moment critically.] No. [*He shakes his head severely, and she breaks off and stares.*] No, that's not right, Mariana.

MARIANA. What?

MR. WATTS. That piece you're singing. You've got it all mixed up.

MARIANA. [*Tossing her head.*] I heard it on the electric piano in the house.

MR. WATTS. You can't trust these new-fangled contraptions. But that piece, Mariana, that's from the opera *Trovatore*. I play it on the cello myself. I know every note of it. I could even write the orchestration for twenty-five or thirty different instruments.

MARIANA. My way sounds all right to me.

MR. WATTS. That's because your ear isn't trained. It's a duet and you're mixing the two parts. You can't do that. You can't be two different people.

MARIANA. Oh, well—

MR. WATTS. Now look here, you sing it again, and I'll sing the bass with you, and I'll show you where you're wrong.

MARIANA. [*Doubtfully.*] Well—

MR. WATTS. All right, ready now—go! [*And he rises from the bench with one leg in his overalls and one leg out, and beats time with his arm. She sings more loudly.*]

Now see, here's where I come in. [*And he does come in, correctly but horribly, and they sing on together. PETER writhes in torment and at length stamps to the top of the steps.*]

PETER. [*Roaring.*] Oh, for God's sake!

[*The duet terminates abruptly. MARIANA resumes her work, MR. WATTS resumes his seat, and PETER resumes his painting. For a few moments there is silence.*]

MR. WATTS. [*Removing the remaining leg from the overalls.*] It's a pity you couldn't go to Paris and get your voice trained.

MARIANA. Who? Me? [*He nods.*] Ho—ho! [*And she laughs merrily at the bare idea.*]

MR. WATTS. You might be a great opera singer some day.

MARIANA. I wouldn't care so much about that. And anyway I wouldn't go away from home, not for anything.

MR. WATTS. But suppose you could be rich and famous.

MARIANA. Ho—ho! Suppose your grandmother had a glass eye!

MR. WATTS. You mean to say you're happy and contented here cooking and washing dishes?

MARIANA. [*With a toss of her head.*] I don't mind.

MR. WATTS. Well, there's no accounting for tastes, as the old woman said when she kissed the cow. [*He begins slowly and deliberately to fold up his overalls preparatory to stowing them away in the satchel.*]

MARIANA. Ain't you contented and happy with the work you do?

MR. WATTS. Nope. [*He shakes his head sadly.*] You see I was born to be a musician, Mariana. It's the only thing I ever cared for. But, well here I am.

MARIANA. [*Sympathetically.*] Oh!

MR. WATTS. My folks was poor and I had to get out and make a living, and— [*He sighs whimsically.*] Well, I been at it ever since. [*He leans back against the edge of the table and nurses his knees.*] But if I'd had the opportunities that some folks had— [*He looks cautiously to the right and left and lowers his voice.*] Well, I wouldn't of been a stone mason, and—well, I wouldn't of been just an ordinary fella either.—No, sir, I'd have made my mark in this old world, and hung it up where folks could see. Yes, sir. [*And he sighs and gets up from the bench just as MILDRED DOREMY comes briskly from the house. She is a small, rather plain little woman in the late forties, with a vaguely pleasant manner, an irritatingly pleasant voice, and rather a tough little will behind it all.*]

MILDRED. Oh! it's finished, is it?

MR. WATTS. There ain't another thing a man could do to that chimney, Mrs. Doremy.

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She cocks her head critically.*] It—it seems a little sharp and—and severe.

MR. WATTS. It's just the way you ordered it. [*And he cocks his head and stares.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She sighs.*] I—I'm afraid I don't like it very much. [*A contemplative pause.*] Is there anything we could do to—to soften it?

MR. WATTS. [*Considering cheerfully.*] Well—we might knock it down and build it up again.

MILDRED. Yes. Well, we'll see. We'll see.

MR. WATTS. Yes, ma'am. [*And he picks up his canvas satchel.*]

MILDRED. I—I can't tell just now. Some matters have come up. [*And involuntarily she glances at PETER on the terrace.*] We'll see.

MR. WATTS. Yes, ma'am. [*And he strolls away and out of the scene.*]

MILDRED. There will be four more for dinner, Mariana.

MARIANA. [*Cheerfully.*] Four.

MILDRED. You must get more things from the house. [*MARIANA starts.*] And you must bring up more wine from the cellar—[*She considers.*] Two bottles. And—oh yes! squeeze four more oranges for cocktails. [*MARIANA vanishes. She walks to the steps and calls.*] Peter! [*No answer. She calls again a bit querulously.*] Peter!

PETER. [*Vaguely, without turning his head.*] Yes?

MILDRED. I've something to tell you.

PETER. I'll be finished presently.—Light—fading—hum hum— [*His voice trails away.*]

MILDRED. [*Doggedly.*] I'm sorry to interrupt you but *this* is important.

PETER. [*Boiling beneath the surface. Muttering.*] Important! My Go— [*He puts down his palette and brushes and comes down the steps with a smile on his lips which are none the less tight with irritation.*] Yes? [*And his voice is hoarse with the effort to make it pleasant and casual.*]

MILDRED. Francis is just back from Mexico. I've asked him to dinner.

PETER. Yes. [*A pause.*] Is that all?

MILDRED. [*Nervously.*] That isn't any of it. [*She hesitates and he looks at her inquiringly.*] Boots is here. She— Well, it appears there are some people stopping at the hotel. A man and his wife, named Payne, I believe. A retired business man from the East. [*She hesitates.*] Boots wanted to know if she could bring him down here. [*He shrugs his shoulders.*] I've asked them to dinner. [*He looks surprised.*] It appears they've fallen in love with the country and that they're looking for a place to buy.

PETER. [*Startled.*] Oh!

MILDRED. Boots says they're very wealthy and that if a place takes their fancy it won't be a question of the cost.

PETER. No? [*He considers the matter.*] Well, I don't know that we want to sell our home.

MILDRED. You've been talking of nothing else for months.

PETER. Well—that's different—talking.

MILDRED. And I don't know how we can go on indefinitely. [*He stares at her with vague trouble in his eyes.*] It's all unbalanced—out of scale. We should have four servants to keep the place in order, and we have—Mariana. I mean it's all like that, Peter, everything. You know it is.

PETER. Yes. I— [*He hesitates.*] Well, I'm not responsible for that.

MILDRED. [*Injured.*] Peter!

PETER. When we came here we had enough to keep us in comfort all our lives.

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She sighs.*] It wasn't very much.

PETER. It was enough. And now— [*His gaze sweeps the scene. Bitterly.*] It's all gone into walls and chimneys,—turned into stone.

MILDRED. [*Close to tears.*] I don't think that's fair, Peter. I don't think it's fair at all. I've had to have an occupation; some interest in my life. I couldn't just sit down and fold my hands. You have your painting.

PETER. It isn't an expensive thing—my painting. [*And he laughs harshly.*]

MILDRED. It's been an expensive thing for me, and—and I've never reproached you for it, Peter. [*She sits down on the bench and puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*]

PETER. What do you mean?

MILDRED. Well, you know, Peter, if you'd only stop to think. I was happy in the East. I had my friends and you had a good position and you were getting on, and then when your father died—well, you gave it all up to—to be a painter.

PETER. It was what I had intended from the start. I loathed the work I had to do—loathed it for twenty years. You knew what my plans and hopes were when you married me.

MILDRED. [*Whimpering.*] Perhaps it would have been better if you hadn't married me at all.

PETER. [*Wearily.*] No.—I don't mean that.

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She sighs.*] I'm sure I've done the best I could with everything. I've tried to make our home attractive, so it would be some inspiration to you, Peter, and—and I thought— [*She hesitates.*]

PETER. What?

MILDRED. [*Reluctantly.*] Well, I thought you—would do something with your pictures.

PETER. [*Drearily.*] Yes.

MILDRED. [*Hastily.*] Of course I know it takes time for an artist to get recognition. I know that. But—well, it's been ten years, Peter.

PETER. Yes. Ten years. [*He sits down dejectedly on the bench.*]

MILDRED. [*Timidly.*] I—I should have understood that better, but—I didn't think it would take so long.

PETER. No. [*He passes his hand wearily across his forehead.*]

MILDRED. And what money we've put into Spindrift—well if we sell it, it all comes back to us. It isn't gone.

PETER. No.

MILDRED. On the income from it we could live very well abroad.

PETER. Yes.

MILDRED. And Peter will finish at the University this year, and if you want him to study in Paris—

PETER. [*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes, he must do that. [*He gets up and paces restlessly about.*] The boy has talent, and—with proper training— [*Half to himself.*] The thing I never had, he may—he may— [*He stops, plunged in thought, gnawing at his fingers, a grim and somehow raw, unfinished figure.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well—

PETER. But that was all settled years ago. I've thought of nothing else. He is to be a painter, and—and to finish what I— [*He breaks off, brooding.*]

MILDRED. Still unless we sell Spindrift, Peter, I'm sure I don't know where we'll find the money to send him abroad.

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] No. [*He considers the matter for a moment. Grimly.*] Then we'll sell it. [*Beginning to be interested in the idea.*] We should all be together in Paris. That's something. I'd take a studio there. [*His enthusiasm mounts.*] It's what I need perhaps. I've often thought of it. In a place like this one slips into a rut. [*He paces, tapping his fingers nervously.*] Yes. It may be the very thing,—the very thing for all of us. [*Facing her abruptly.*] Don't you think so, Mildred?

MILDRED. Well— [*She sighs.*] I don't know, Peter. I think perhaps it is, but of course one never knows just what is best to do.

PETER. No. One never knows.

MILDRED. And it may be Spindrifft's not what they're looking for at all.

PETER. No, of course.

MILDRED. And even if it were, it's likely enough we couldn't agree on terms.

PETER. [*The enthusiasm is gone.*] Yes. Well— [*He sighs wearily and sits down at the end of the table.* MARIANA returns with a tray and two bottles of red wine.]

MILDRED. [*Jumping up from the bench.*] You must add a little water to the chowder and it will serve them all.

MARIANA. Yes, I did already.

MILDRED. Are there eleven or twelve? Let me see— [*Counting to herself.*] Two and Francis three, and

Konrad and Bunny five, and Ellen and her father seven, and the Paynes nine, and Boots ten,—ten—ten, and oh yes! of course, Young Peter. Eleven, Mariana.

MARIANA. Yes, eleven. That's what I'm setting for.

MILDRED. I'll fix the flowers myself. [*And she hurries away to the garden.* MARIANA is busy for a few moments at the table and then returns to the house. PETER gets up with a deep sigh and starts towards the steps, and at this moment YOUNG PETER appears on the terrace having climbed the path from the shore. Save for his baggy flannel trousers and short sleeved white shirt open at the neck, he is as much like old PETER as twenty-one can be like fifty. There are the same tight lips, the same deadly seriousness, the same eagerness, and the same vague feeling of helplessness and doubt. He has a sketching block under his arm, and he pauses on the terrace to look at the picture on the easel.]

YOUNG PETER. [*Earnestly.*] That's great, Father.

PETER. [*Pleased.*] Do you think so? It—it's only a sketch. I haven't finished it.

YOUNG PETER. I wish I could do one tenth as well. [*He sighs and descends the steps.*]

PETER. You'll do far better things than I.

YOUNG PETER. No. [*And he laughs and shakes his head.*]

PETER. Why did you come back so early?

YOUNG PETER. Is it?—I didn't know. [*Hastily.*] Well the light was fading.

PETER. What have you done?

YOUNG PETER. [*Handing him the sketching block.*] It isn't anything. [*He looks around as if for someone.*]

PETER. [*Studying the sketch.*] Hum—I think it's very good.

YOUNG PETER. [*Delighted.*] You do? [*He looks over his father's shoulder. Doubtfully.*] Well, I don't know—[*As he turns away. Carelessly.*] Have you seen Mrs. Brandes, Father?

PETER. [*Still studying the sketch. Absently.*] Bunny?—No. They're coming to dinner though, I think.—Look here, my boy; that's very interesting. What you've done there with those shadows.

YOUNG PETER. [*With another flash of pleasure.*] Do you think so?—Well, I didn't know. I thought it might be and then—well, I wasn't sure. But I'm glad you like it, Father.

PETER. [*Handing back the sketch.*] You have a fine gift, Peter.

YOUNG PETER. Well, I don't know— [*He sits down on the bench with his back against the table.*]

PETER. Don't ever question that. All that you need is training.

YOUNG PETER. [*Pondering.*] One can't be sure.

PETER. One can't be sure of anything. Still if you don't make stupid blunders—

YOUNG PETER. What sort?

PETER. Give no hostages to fortune.

YOUNG PETER. I don't know what you mean.

PETER. No? [*He hesitates.*] I lost twenty years out of my life, Peter. The best years, the ones that should have counted, and now— [*His gaze sweeps back over the wall and the chimney and the house, and he sighs in spite of himself.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Softly.*] Yes, I—I see.

PETER. You've a fine gift and a fine career ahead. No one can cheat you of it but yourself.

YOUNG PETER. I won't do that, no fear. [*He laughs boyishly.*]

PETER. You'll finish at the University this Spring, and then you're going to Paris for two years.

YOUNG PETER. But can you afford that, Father?

PETER. Afford? [*He hesitates and again his glance sweeps the masonry.*] Oh yes!—Why, yes, of course. [*He laughs mirthlessly.*]

YOUNG PETER. Yes, but—

PETER. Nonsense, I tell you! [*With all the deadly seriousness of which the man is capable.*] I've planned for everything, my boy. I've counted on you since the day that you were born. Don't fail me, Peter—that's all I ask.

YOUNG PETER. [*With equal deadliness.*] I won't, Father.

FRANCIS. [*Outside and approaching, boisterously.*] Hello! Hello! [*He breezes in, a tall, athletic looking, rather handsome, debonnaire, and dashing man of forty-five, with a loud, laughing voice and many gestures. On the surface there is nothing of his brother about him, but there is much beneath. He is gaily clad in linen knickers and a sky blue sweater with hose to match.*] Hello! Who's this? Young Peter, bless my soul! [*He embraces him affectionately, then holds him at arm's length.*] My nephew,—my only nephew,—well, of course, of course. But look here—I thought you were in school.

YOUNG PETER. Vacation. I'm going back tomorrow.

FRANCIS. Ah! [*And spying old PETER in the background.*] Peter! Bless my heart! [*He strides to him and they greet each other, each in his way, but with affection. MARIANA coming in now with more dishes on a tray almost collides with YOUNG PETER who is backing toward the gate.*]

YOUNG PETER. Oh! I'm sorry, Mariana.

MARIANA [*Beaming.*] That's all right.

YOUNG PETER. Do you know if Mrs. Brandes has come yet? Have you seen her?

MARIANA. Yes, she's here. She was in the garden just now.

YOUNG PETER. Oh thanks! [*And he's gone to the garden like a shot. MARIANA unloads her tray and will presently go out.*]

PETER. Glad to be back?

FRANCIS. Well, of course. But fancy, look here, I've been gone the best part of a year. I went down from Nogales through Sonora, stopping here and there. Fascinating really, primitive of course— [*He sits down by the small table waving PETER to a seat across from him.*] Then to the capital. Charming,— such color, such atmosphere. Do you know, I spent three months there.

PETER. [*Stemming the tide vigorously.*] Have you done any work?

FRANCIS. Ha, ha! Good old Peter! What a question!

PETER. But have you?

FRANCIS. Well, of course. Don't be silly!

PETER. Good!

FRANCIS. As a matter of fact, not actual work you know.

PETER. Hum—

FRANCIS. But look here, writing—plays for example—it's not like painting—not in the least. A chap can set up an easel anywhere and dash off something.

PETER. Hum—

FRANCIS. But a play! There's a thing to think about, you see. It's got to boil and simmer. You've got to have a story. It's got to be worth while.

PETER. But I thought you went to Mexico to write a play.

FRANCIS. Ha, ha, ha! Well I did, of course. Look here, don't be silly. I can't be doing hack stuff like *The Bad Man* and *The Dove*, now can I?

PETER. [*Doubtfully.*] No.

FRANCIS. I've got to get under the lid of things, you know. One can't catch big fish on the surface. You've got to get at fundamentals,—at the truth.

PETER. And did you?

FRANCIS. Well, don't be silly, Peter. Of course I did.

PETER. Ah!

FRANCIS. I've an idea in my head. I shan't tell you now. It hasn't crystallized—well not entirely. But you'll see. A play, Peter! What a play! An elemental, primordial thing, torn from the very soil of Mexico. [*He jumps up and strides about.*]

PETER. Then it's good you went.

FRANCIS. Good? Well, of course. One *must* have contacts. There's nothing here, Peter, utterly. It's barren, sterile. Rocks and trees and sea, but lifeless, inert,—deadly. [*He pauses by the table and deftly abstracts a bottle of red wine.*]

PETER. [*Brooding gloomily.*] I've thought of that.

FRANCIS. [*Filling a glass.*] Well, of course, of course, don't be silly! An artist *must* have contacts. [*He drains the glass as MILDRED comes in with an armful of flowers.*]

MILDRED. [*Reproachfully.*] Francis! I thought you were going to stop drinking.

FRANCIS. [*Refilling the glass.*] Ha, ha, ha! What an idea!

MILDRED. But you said before you went away—

FRANCIS. Good Lord, that was a year ago! [*And he drains the glass again.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She sighs and turns away to arrange the flowers. And now ELLEN WITBECK and her FATHER appear in the entrance. The girl, not much past thirty, is approaching spinsterhood regretfully and ungracefully. She is pale and anæmic looking, without force or charm, and her voice is plaintive with long cankering discontent. MR. WITBECK is sixty-five, a thin, frail, white-haired man with an air of constant irritation.*]

ELLEN. Are we early?

MILDRED. Oh no!

FRANCIS. Bless my soul! [*And he leaps to his feet and runs to meet them.*] Ellen! By Jove, you're getting more charming every day. [*He kisses her forehead.*] Well, of course, of course—don't be silly. Ha, ha, ha! [*He pumps the WITBECK nerveless arm.*] And Papa Witbeck! Splendid! Splendid!

MR. WITBECK. Humph! [*And he releases his hand without ceremony, sits down in the swing and takes a newspaper from his pocket.*]

ELLEN. [*Wistfully.*] You've had a wonderful time, haven't you, Francis?

[*And now YOUNG PETER with BUNNY at his side crosses the clearing on the terrace coming from the house and, pausing for a moment quite unobserved to look down on the scene, they take the path to the left which leads down to the shore. One has only a glimpse of BUNNY. She is thirty perhaps and blonde, and pretty, and demure, and slender and graceful too. And she wears a little sport dress of soft white silk that clings in the soft curves of her body.*]

FRANCIS. Gorgeous!

ELLEN. Oh, how I should love a trip like that!

FRANCIS. Well, of course—

ELLEN. Poor little me!—Why if I could only go back East for a few weeks I'd be happy. But— [*She shrugs her shoulders and glances toward the Witbeck newspaper with an expression of unconcealed annoyance.*]

FRANCIS. [*Bursting with eagerness.*] Look here, I really must tell you all about my trip. You'll simply love it. [*And he sits down on the bench and pulls her down beside him.*] I went down from Nogales through Sonora stopping here and there. Fascinating really,—primitive of course— [*His voice subsides.*]

MILDRED. [*Crossing to PETER.*] Peter!

PETER. [*Roused from reverie.*] Yes?

MILDRED. Don't you think you'd better change?

PETER. Oh yes. [*He stands up. Doubtfully.*] Do you think I should wear my cook things?

MILDRED. Well, I don't know. [*She considers the matter.*] Perhaps you should. It lends an atmosphere.

PETER. Well— [*He sighs and turns away and at this moment KONRAD BRANDES strides through the gate. He is a powerfully built man of sixty with fine, rather stern features and a pointed beard. His voice is deep and he speaks with a slight accent. He wears a wool shirt, khaki knickers and puttees, and carries a heavy walking stick.*]

KONRAD. [*Pausing near the entrance.*] So! So!

FRANCIS. Bless my soul! Konrad! Good old Konrad! [*And he leaps to his feet and flies to him, embracing him and slapping him on the back and laughing in his big, boyish fashion. And PETER slips quietly away.*] Well, how are you, eh? [*He holds him at arm's length.*] By Jove, you're getting younger every day!

KONRAD. [*With an air of satisfaction.*] You think so?

FRANCIS. Well, of course. Look at him, Mildred! Isn't he a miracle? How does he do it?

MILDRED. [*Doubtfully.*] Well, I don't know.—He's eating seaweed now.

FRANCIS. Seaweed? Good Lord!

KONRAD. It's full of iodine. Every morning at six o'clock I climb down on the rocks and I eat two handfuls.

FRANCIS. My God!

KONRAD. [*Striking his chest with a clenched fist.*] Vigor and vitality.

FRANCIS. Well, of course, I dare say, but look here: is it worth it?

KONRAD. Worth it? Ha! [*He laughs shortly.*] I am not so young now, and—a man in my position must be careful. [*Abruptly.*] Have you seen Bunny, Mildred?

[MR. WITBECK *puts down his paper and listens with a sardonic expression.*]

MILDRED. [*Busy with the flowers. Absently.*] Bunny? —No.

KONRAD. She came over ahead of me for—something.

FRANCIS. She was in the garden.

KONRAD. I was just there.

FRANCIS. Well, no matter. She's around somewhere. But look here, sit down. [*He tries to pull him down on the bench but KONRAD resists.*] I want to tell you all about my trip. I've had a most amazing time. I went down from Nogales through Sonora stopping here and there. Fascinating really,—primitive of course—

KONRAD. [*Interrupting heavily.*] I have been all over Mexico.

FRANCIS. Well, I know, of course, but—

KONRAD. [*Pulling his arm free.*] In every nook and corner.

FRANCIS. Such atmosphere! Such color! The primitive, primordial charm—

KONRAD. There is nothing there, absolutely nothing.

FRANCIS. But good God!

KONRAD. For the primitive you must go to the South Seas. For color to Java and Sumatra.

FRANCIS. But look here—in Guanajuato—

KONRAD. Guanajuato?—Bah! A stupid place. But excuse me, please. [*He tramps away toward the steps.*]

FRANCIS. [*With a vast shrug and a pitying smile.*] Well, of course—

KONRAD. I just have a look around. [*And he mounts the steps and stands on the terrace, shading his eyes to search this way and that, and will presently march off to the right behind the trees.*]

FRANCIS. [*Pleasantly.*] He's quite impossible.—I think he's getting senile.

ELLEN. He's so afraid of losing her.

FRANCIS. Well, of course, but good Lord! what good is anything one's so afraid of losing?

MILDRED. Well, I don't know— [*She sighs.*] He's lost so many.—It's got to be a sort of mania, I suppose. We—we've all got something, Francis.

FRANCIS. Oh, it's senility. Look at the way he chatters. One can't get a word in edgeways.

[MR. WITBECK suddenly crumples up his paper with a great rattle and utters at the same time a terrifying kind of roar.]

ELLEN. [*Starting to her feet.*] Oh! What is it, Father?

MR. WITBECK. I get so sick of these damn papers! There's nothing in them but the climate.

BOOTS. [*Dashing in. Excitedly.*] Mildred! Oh Mildred! [*She is a cute little tike of a girl with a boyish haircut and jodhpores, and a white silk shirt.*] Mildred! Mr. Payne just telephoned. They're leaving the hotel right now.

[MR. WITBECK is listening around the edge of his paper.]

MILDRED. Walking?

BOOTS. Oh God, no! They've got their own car and a chauffeur, too. They shipped it all the way out from New York.

FRANCIS. [*Horrifed.*] Tourists?

ELLEN. I've met them. They're nice people.

FRANCIS. [*Humorously.*] Well, of course. In that case we should make some leis. [*He looks about.*] Now then of what could one make leis?

MR. WITBECK. [*Savagely.*] Poison oak.

FRANCIS. [*Roaring with appreciation.*] Excellent! Splendid! The very thing! Of course, of course, why not? [*He strolls to the steps, mounts to the terrace,*

stands there for a few moments looking at PETER'S picture with a critical and disapproving air, and finally wanders off behind the trees toward the house.]

BOOTS. They'll be here any minute.

MILDRED. [*Fluttering.*] Well, I don't know—I ought to change my dress.

BOOTS. [*Impatiently.*] Well, go ahead, then. Hurry!

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She starts and pauses at the gate.*] Will you girls finish with the flowers?

BOOTS. Yes. Yes, go on. [*MILDRED goes out.*] Here, Ellen, lend a hand. [*There are several flat vases on the table. Each of the girls picks up a handful of flowers and sets to work. After a moment.*] I'm so excited I could scream.

ELLEN. Excited? Why?

BOOTS. Why?—well— [*She hesitates.*] Because I see a chance to make a deal that'll put me on easy street.

ELLEN. [*Vaguely.*] Oh!

BOOTS. And say, if it goes through I'll kick the dust of this place off my feet.

ELLEN. Where will you go?

BOOTS. [*Pausing to gaze ecstatically into space.*] I'm going to make a cruise around the world.

ELLEN. [*Gasping.*] Oh!

BOOTS. That's right, no fooling. One of those big ships

that takes you everywhere.—Five months and it costs two thousand bucks. That's money!

ELLEN. You lucky girl!

BOOTS. I've got my reservation made and everything—except the price.

ELLEN. And is it just for fun you're going?

BOOTS. Fun? Not on your life. It's an investment.

ELLEN. Investment? What do you mean?

[*And MR. WITBECK is listening too.*]

BOOTS. Well, it's like this: [*She sits on the edge of the table swinging her feet.*] I'm selling real estate. Well, I hate it—always have. I've only got one ambition in my life. I want to write scenarios for the movies. You know that.

ELLEN. Yes.

BOOTS. Well, I can't seem to get by. I burn the midnight oil and break my nails on the Corona keys and still—[*She shrugs.*]

ELLEN. Don't they give you any encouragement?

BOOTS. That's just what I'm coming to. I got a letter the other day from a big man down there. If I told you his name you'd shout. Well, he hit the nail right on the head.

ELLEN. What did he say?

BOOTS. He said: You're a clever kid, but you haven't had enough experience—of life.

ELLEN. Oh!

BOOTS. All right. Now watch me get it. This trip around the world, that's just a start.

ELLEN. [*With a wistful sigh.*] It must be wonderful to be able to do what you want and go where you please. [*And she glances resentfully at her father.*]

BOOTS. I don't see that you've got much kick coming, Ellen. You've got a home and someone that cares for you. I never had either.

ELLEN. Yes, I know. But—

BOOTS. And you're not out on your own to make your daily bread. Believe me, things are pretty soft for you.

ELLEN. You don't understand at all. It's a crime for a girl to be buried in a hole like this.

BOOTS. [*Startled.*] Huh?

ELLEN. The best years of my life wasted.

BOOTS. Wasted?

ELLEN. Yes, wasted. I might have had a husband—children perhaps— Those are the things *I* wanted.

BOOTS [*Doubtfully.*] Well you can get stung with those things too.

MARIANA. [*Coming in with a load of pots and kettles.*] Some people just came in a limousine. [*She crosses to the grill.*]

BOOTS. They've come. [*And she is off like a shot, calling over her shoulder.*] Come on, Ellen! Hurry!

[*And ELLEN sighs and follows. A few moments pass. MARIANA is busy at the grill.*]

MR. WITBECK. Mariana!

MARIANA. Yes?

MR. WITBECK. Is there chowder?

MARIANA. Yes.

MR. WITBECK. [*Anxiously.*] Is there garlic in it?

MARIANA. [*Nodding cheerfully.*] Yes.

MR. WITBECK. [*Groaning.*] Oh!

MARIANA. I made some for you separate.

MR. WITBECK. [*Sighing with satisfaction.*] Ah! You are a good girl, Mariana—a good girl.

[*She laughs and lights the fire, and will presently return to the house.*]

MILDRED'S VOICE. [*Approaching.*] I want you to see the sunset from the terrace.

BOOTS' VOICE. Oh, she must do that! [*They come in now with MRS. PAYNE between them. She is a large, imposing woman of fifty-five with a very social manner, an irritating voice, and a tendency to gush. MR. WITBECK squeezes back in the swing to escape notice.*] Spindrift is the most spectacular home on the coast, Mrs. Payne.

MILDRED. Well, I don't know—

BOOTS. It is, Mildred. Everybody says so.

MRS. PAYNE. [*Gazing about rapturously.*] Charming! Charming!

BOOTS. It's been in "House and Garden" and "The Country Gentleman." They're mad about it.

MRS. PAYNE. I've dreamed of an environment like this all my life.

BOOTS. Everyone raves about the place.

MRS. PAYNE. I've always thought: to do worth-while things one must have a proper setting. Don't you?

MILDRED. [*Vaguely.*] Oh, yes.

MRS. PAYNE. I've spent my life raising a family, Mrs. Doremy, and they're all grown up now and married and flown away from the nest— [*She sighs appropriately.*] And now I'm free to take up—er—the things I've always yearned for. I'm so full of joy I'm like a little child.

BOOTS. A person can't help doing things in a place like this.

MRS. PAYNE. It must be an inspiration just to live here.

MILDRED. [*Vaguely.*] Oh yes!

MRS. PAYNE. I'm sure I should find it so. It is all a poem—a—a sonnet carved in stone.

[KONRAD *appears on the terrace.*]

MILDRED. Well, I don't know—

MRS. PAYNE. [*Whispering.*] And who is that distinguished looking gentleman?

MILDRED. Oh, that's one of our neighbors.

BOOTS. Konrad Brandes, the celebrated sculptor. [*He descends the steps frowning and preoccupied, and almost runs over them.*]

MILDRED. Oh, Konrad, I want you to meet Mrs. Payne!

MRS. PAYNE. [*Gushing.*] So happy, Mr. Brandes. [*He bows stiffly.*] I had the pleasure of meeting your charming daughter at the hotel the other day.

KONRAD. [*Staring.*] My daughter?

MRS. PAYNE. [*Blissfully unconscious of warning glances.*] Yes. Such a sweet girl! She was with your son, Mrs. Doremy. I thought at the time: what an interesting couple!

KONRAD. [*Glaring at her.*] I have no daughter.

MRS. PAYNE. [*Confused.*] Oh! I—I—

KONRAD. You are mistaken, Madam. Pardon. [*And he turns on his heel and stalks away to the house.*]

MRS. PAYNE. Oh! I'm so sorry. I've made some stupid blunder.

BOOTS. [*Hastily.*] It doesn't matter.

MRS. PAYNE. But—Good Heavens!—surely that young girl is not his wife.

MILDRED. Oh no!—no. [*She hesitates.*] Well—that is, not exactly.

MRS. PAYNE. [*Completely at sea.*] Oh!

MILDRED. You see—er—

BOOTS. [*In great haste.*] You must see the sunset, Mrs. Payne. [*And she grabs her arm and hurries her up the steps.*]

MRS. PAYNE. [*Gasping ecstatically.*] Oh! [*She is motionless for a moment gazing at the sea.*] I understand now why you called it Spindrift.

BOOTS. It's the finest view and the finest surf on the coast, Mrs. Payne.

MRS. PAYNE. I have never seen anything so beautiful. [*They stand there for a while and presently go on behind the trees to the house.*]

FRANCIS' VOICE. [*Approaching.*] Well, of course. But you must see the terrace—sunset. Gorgeous!—Oh, yes, gorgeous! [*And he appears, his arm linked through MR. PAYNE'S. Mrs. Payne's husband is a mild, quiet, in-offensive little man of sixty with a bald head and gold-rimmed nose glasses. He wears one of those perfectly proper and characterless golf suits designed for conservative business men.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Looking about.*] Er—very interesting. [*His voice is as colorless as his costume. MR. WITBECK peeks around the corner of the swing and examines him with interest.*]

FRANCIS. Well, of course. As I was saying, Mr. Lane—

MR. PAYNE. Payne.

FRANCIS. I beg your pardon. I was about to say, in Springfield for example,—

MR. PAYNE. [*Mildly but firmly.*] Plainfield.

FRANCIS. Certainly, of course, silly of me— [*He pauses at the table to fill a tumbler of wine.*] A glass of wine?

MR. PAYNE. Thank you, no.

FRANCIS. So sorry! [*He drains his glass at a gulp.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Examining the grill.*] Do they cook out here?

FRANCIS. Well, of course, Ha, ha! As a matter of fact in Mexico they cook on the sidewalks, in the streets, anywhere, everywhere. It's quite amusing, really droll. Have you ever been in Mexico? [MR. PAYNE *mur-murs.*] No? Well, look here, you'd be interested. Fascinating country. As a matter of fact—

PETER'S VOICE. [*Shouting from the house.*] Cocktails! Cocktails!

FRANCIS. I beg your pardon. Cocktails! Well, of course, Ha, ha! [*And he strides toward the house and out of sight. MR. PAYNE takes a few uncertain steps after him.*]

MR. WITBECK. [*Poking his head around the edge of the swing.*] They make 'em out of home-made stuff.

MR. PAYNE. [*Doubtfully.*] Oh!

MR. WITBECK. The last one I drank made me sick for a week.

MR. PAYNE. My stomach isn't very good.

MR. WITBECK. You'd better sit down.

MR. PAYNE. Er—thanks. [*He sits down in the chair by the swing.*]

MR. WITBECK. My name's Witbeck. I was in hides and leather in St. Louis.

MR. PAYNE. Um—um— [*He mumbles something and they shake hands quite solemnly.*]

MR. WITBECK. Broke down a few years back. Neuritis settled in my arm and leg. [MR. PAYNE *murmurs sympathetically.*] Had to give up the battle. Well— [*He sighs.*]

MR. PAYNE. Um— Um— Been sort of knocked out myself. Stomach trouble. Doctors say ulcers.—Well, I don't know— [MR. WITBECK *murmurs sympathetically.*] Turned my business over to my boys. [*He sighs.*]

MR. WITBECK. About the time things get to going good something comes along.

MR. PAYNE. Yes, that's right. We've been traveling quite a bit. Europe and around.

MR. WITBECK. Not much in it?

MR. PAYNE. No.—My wife's taken quite a fancy to this place.

MR. WITBECK. [*Noncommittally.*] Um—

MR. PAYNE. She's always been sort of interested in artists and—er—people like that.

MR. WITBECK. Um—

MR. PAYNE. You—er—you like it here?

MR. WITBECK. The climate's all right.

MR. PAYNE. How do you—er—put in your time?

MR. WITBECK. [*With a harsh laugh.*] I've got a flower garden.

MR. PAYNE. Hum—I don't know much about such things.

MR. WITBECK. No, nor I don't. The wind blows it out, and the rain washes it out, and the drought burns it up. [*He hoots derisively.*] When we get old we play with toys again.

MR. PAYNE. I like to play a little golf myself, but—er—nobody around here seems to be interested in it.

MR. WITBECK. They're all too busy to play golf. [*And he hoots again.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Doubtfully.*] Yes, I suppose so. [*He sighs. A long pause.*] Interesting idea: cooking in the garden.

MR. WITBECK. They don't cook anything out here. That's all a fake. Mariana, the girl, she cooks everything inside. They only warnt it up out here.

MR. PAYNE. Oh!

MR. WITBECK. You asked me if I liked it here. Weil, I don't. I wouldn't trade fifty feet on Olive Street for the whole damn outfit.

MR. PAYNE. Dear me!

MR. WITBECK. It's all like that cooking there—a fake.

MR. PAYNE. The people—er—seem very pleasant.

MR. WITBECK. They're pleasant enough. It isn't that.—But they're bankrupt.

MR. PAYNE. [*Startled.*] Bankrupt?

MR. WITBECK. Yes, bankrupt. That's the only word I know that fits the case. But I don't mean money. I mean something worse.

MR. PAYNE. [*Very vaguely.*] Oh!

MR. WITBECK. And living here—that's like working for a concern that's broke, and going deeper in the red each day.

MR. PAYNE. I see.

MR. WITBECK. And everyone knows it from the president to the office boy, but nobody ever says a word. Just waiting till the sheriff comes to close 'em up. [*Solemnly.*] Well, that's my idea of hell.

MR. PAYNE. Yes—er—I should think so.

MR. WITBECK. And after while it gets you. It saps your strength and you wonder what's the good of anything. [MR. PAYNE *mumbles.*] Daub and scribble, and scribble and daub! [*He gets up and hobbles about excitedly.*] And what does it all amount to? Nothing—

MR. PAYNE. I don't know much about artists.

MR. WITBECK. No, nor I don't. But they don't sell anything, these people.

MR. PAYNE. [*Startled.*] No.

MR. WITBECK. And if a thing won't sell, it's no good—no, sir, no good. I learned that in business long ago.

MR. PAYNE. [*Nodding.*] Very true. Very true.

MR. WITBECK. It's got in my head, this thing—round and round and round. Circles—always coming back just where you started from. Nothing plus nothing, nothing. See what I mean?

MR. PAYNE. [*Doubtfully.*] Er—yes.

MR. WITBECK. There's times I get so low, I'd like to throw myself off of these cliffs.

MR. PAYNE. Dear me!

MR. WITBECK. [*Less violently.*] I guess I'm getting loony like the rest of them. [*He laughs drearily.*] When a man has no occupation he gets to thinking, and that's the worst thing in the world. It don't get you anywhere.

MR. PAYNE. There's a good deal in that.

MR. WITBECK. A man should stay in the harness till he drops. [*With intense feeling.*] God, how I wish I had!

PETER'S VOICE. [*Shouting from the house.*] Mr. Witbeck! Mr. Payne! Cocktails!

MR. WITBECK. [*With a savage laugh.*] Cocktails! And they're a fake, too. [*He hobbles toward the entrance.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Rising and following.*] Well, I don't know—My wife's taken a great fancy to it here, and—
[*He sighs.*]

MR. WITBECK. You'll see. You'll see. [*He disappears.*]

MR. PAYNE. She's always been sort of interested in artists and—er—people like that. [*And he goes out.*]

[*A few moments pass, and now there is a stirring in the shrubbery atop the wall at the far left. The branches are pushed aside and YOUNG PETER'S head appears and reconnoitres. Satisfied the coast is clear he clambers over the coping and descends on the projecting stones. He takes a few steps so that he can see there is no one on the terrace, then returns.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Softly.*] There's no one here, Bunny. Come on!

BUNNY. [*Poking out her head.*] Are you sure?

YOUNG PETER. They're all at the house. I hear them.

BUNNY. Well— [*She pushes through the shrubs and looks down doubtfully.*]

YOUNG PETER. Turn around and come down—like a ladder.

BUNNY. Oh! [*She turns part way, appears to miss her balance, and turns quickly back with a very soft little scream.*] I can't really. [*It is not much of a hazard. One doubts the sincerity of her concern. Her voice is soft and caressing, and she is so very feminine, and yet—one seems to detect a hardness in her wide blue eyes and in her carmine lips.*]

YOUNG PETER. You can of course.

BUNNY. I'm bound to fall.

YOUNG PETER. Well, if you do, I'll catch you.

BUNNY. Well— [*And she starts down gingerly enough, and, when the ground is safely within reach, with another soft little scream.*] Oh! Oh! Peter! [*She does actually fall straight into his arms, instantly to be folded there with all the mad, passionate earnestness that is DOREMY. She might struggle, but she doesn't. She might hold her face away from the boy's searching lips, but she doesn't. She might keep her body from melting against his, but she doesn't. And the long moments pass. It is PETER who is first satisfied, or terrified. He lets her go and steps back.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Hoarsely.*] Oh God!—God! [*And BUNNY leans with her back against the wall with a look of speculation in her eyes. And one does not think of her at all as an outraged woman, but rather notices that, instinctively perhaps, she straightens her hair and shakes the wrinkles from her skirt.*] I—I couldn't help it, Bunny.

BUNNY. [*Striving for just the proper note.*] Yes, I know. [*And she sighs.*]

YOUNG PETER. I never meant to do a thing like that. I have some sense of honor. I suppose you'll hate me now.

BUNNY. [*Softly.*] No.

YOUNG PETER. But you must. How can you help it? I've ruined everything. And how can I look your husband in the face after—what's happened?

BUNNY. [*She seems to consider for a moment.*] I have no husband, Peter.

YOUNG PETER. What?

BUNNY. I am not married to Konrad Brandes. He already has a wife somewhere.

YOUNG PETER. [*Gasping.*] What are you saying?

BUNNY. It's perfectly true, Peter. Everyone knows it but yourself.

YOUNG PETER. But you—you—

BUNNY. I—I was very young, Peter. [*She contrives artfully watching his eyes for every cue.*] He said it would only be a little while—his wife would divorce him—and—and we could be married. [*She sighs.*] But I found out afterwards it wasn't true, and that he'd said the same to—to other girls.

YOUNG PETER. The dog!—But you love him, Bunny.

BUNNY. [*Cautiously.*] No. [*And she slowly shakes her head.*]

YOUNG PETER. But you did love him. You must have loved him. Else how could you— [*He breaks off with a groan.*]

BUNNY. [*Pathetically.*] He—he had been kind to me, and I was sorry for him, Peter. He was very lonely and he seemed to need me.

YOUNG PETER. Yes, but did you love him?

BUNNY. I was fond of him as a girl might be fond of her own father. But I never loved him, Peter, as a woman loves a man. How could I? [*She laughs with a little note of hysteria.*] He was old and I was young. His life was ending, mine beginning. Love? No.—Such things don't happen.

YOUNG PETER. [*Groping blindly in his thoughts.*] Yes, I see.—I've thought of that myself.—I've often wondered—

BUNNY. I had to tell you, Peter. [*She sighs.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Dully.*] Yes.

BUNNY. I couldn't let you think you'd been dishonorable or—or injured anyone.

YOUNG PETER. [*Brooding.*] No.

BUNNY. You thought perhaps I'd hate you now. [*He raises his head and stares at her.*] You said so, Peter. [*She sighs, and goes on, oh! so wistfully.*] What a funny thing life is! In a moment everything is changed and upside down. For, see: it is you who hate—perhaps despise me— [*Her voice breaks.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*In passionate protest.*] Bunny!

BUNNY. [*Very sadly.*] But I don't blame you.

YOUNG PETER. Hate you? Despise you? Ah! how can you say a thing like that? I love you, Bunny. I've thought of nothing else for weeks. It doesn't matter to me, anything, except to know you don't belong to him. And if you'd care— Ah, Bunny! if you'd only care—

[*He goes toward her and she backs away against the wall.*]

BUNNY. Peter! Peter!

YOUNG PETER. [*Frantically.*] But you must say something—something—

BUNNY. You're just a boy.

YOUNG PETER. I'm twenty-one.

BUNNY. And you'll go back to college and forget me in a week.

YOUNG PETER. [*Bitterly.*] So you think I am like that: a petter and a necker.

BUNNY. [*Laughing.*] No, Peter dear, the Doremys are not like that.

YOUNG PETER. Well, I'm not. I've never cared for any girl before.—I—I'm not playing at this thing. I—Well, I couldn't do that.

BUNNY. Yes, I understand.

YOUNG PETER. And I love you, Bunny. [*He looks straight into her eyes.*]

BUNNY. [*Tremulously.*] You're such a dear, Peter. [*He tries to take her in his arms but she evades him.*] Stop! Hark!

YOUNG PETER. What?

BUNNY. [*Whispering.*] There's someone coming from the house.

YOUNG PETER. You're only trying to get rid of me.

BUNNY. [*Thoroughly alarmed now.*] Quick! Go! Please!

YOUNG PETER. I won't. There's no one.

BUNNY. [*A complete change in her manner and her voice.*] Oh, don't be a fool! Hurry! Hurry! [*And he hears something now for he turns like a flash, darts up the terrace steps, and is gone. An instant later KONRAD strides through the entrance and peers sharply about in the deepening twilight. She hails him pleasantly.*] Hello! [*And she saunters toward him.*]

KONRAD. [*With an involuntary sigh of relief.*] So! [*He goes on quickly in a disagreeable tone.*] With whom were you speaking?

BUNNY. Speaking? When?

KONRAD. Just now.

BUNNY. Why with no one.

KONRAD. [*Suspiciously.*] So? I thought I heard voices.

BUNNY. Not here.

KONRAD. Hum—I've been looking for you everywhere.

BUNNY. Yes?

KONRAD. Where have you been?

BUNNY. [*Lightly.*] Oh, just around!

KONRAD. But where?

BUNNY. [*Irritably.*] I took a walk, that's all. What does it matter?

KONRAD. You didn't see Young Peter, eh?

BUNNY. [*Laughing carelessly.*] Young Peter! What an idea!

KONRAD. Maybe. All the same you were at the Hotel with him the other day.

BUNNY. [*Startled.*] The Hotel? [*She shrugs.*] Well, suppose I was, what then?

KONRAD. I don't want you going out with that—that whippersnapper.

BUNNY. [*Wearily.*] Oh, don't be absurd! He's only a boy.

KONRAD. So? [*Meaningly.*] He's full grown.

BUNNY. [*Catching her breath.*] That was a dirty thing to say.

KONRAD. [*Sullenly.*] Well, don't give me cause then.

BUNNY. [*Bitterly.*] Cause! What cause have I ever given you? What cause have I ever had a chance to give you? You dog every step I take; rattling your keys and cracking your whip.

KONRAD. [*Angrily.*] So?

BUNNY. A convict in his cell isn't better guarded.

KONRAD. Well, I have learned some things in my life, and you don't hang a pair of horns on my head if I can help it.

BUNNY. You should be used to it by now. [*And she laughs.*]

KONRAD. What do you mean by that?

BUNNY. It's common knowledge; every woman that you ever had has cheated you.

KONRAD. So? And you? [*His voice is cold with fury.*]

BUNNY. [*Evenly.*] When I get ready to quit I'll tell you so.

KONRAD. [*Sneering.*] Perhaps.

BUNNY. There's no perhaps—do you understand?

KONRAD. No? And still I think I have the right to be suspicious.

BUNNY. Right? What right?

KONRAD. Well, when a man is such a fool as to pick a girl up off the street—

BUNNY. [*Gasping.*] Oh! [*Wildly.*] You lie, damn you! you lie! [*He shrugs his shoulders and turns away. She runs to him and seizes his arm.*] Turn around here! You can't get away with anything like that. Look at me! Look at me! Say that again! Say it again!

KONRAD. [*Trying to release his arm.*] Bah! Don't make a scene here!

BUNNY. Well, you take that back then. Take it back.

KONRAD. I suppose you want to pretend—

BUNNY. I'm not pretending anything, but I wasn't on

the street,—never, never—and you God damn well know it

KONRAD. [*Jerking his sleeve free, muttering.*] Ach! Have it your own way.

BUNNY. Yes. [*And she takes a deep breath.*] I guess I'll have it that way. I guess I will.

KONRAD. [*Grumbling.*] You must take me for a fool if you think I have forgotten.

BUNNY. Forgotten what?

KONRAD. Bah! [*He shrugs his shoulders.*]

BUNNY. That I was a model working in the studios?

KONRAD. Bah! [*He shrugs again.*]

BUNNY. What are you driving at?

KONRAD. You make me laugh with all these airs. Five years ago you were living with old Solly Stern, the art dealer.

BUNNY. [*Evenly.*] Yes, that's right, Konrad.

KONRAD. How many there had been before— [*He shrugs.*]

BUNNY. You don't know.

KONRAD. But he threw you out because you were philandering with his son.

BUNNY. [*Catching her breath.*] That's what he told you.

KONRAD. Yes. And then—

BUNNY. You picked me up.

KONRAD. Yes.

BUNNY. But not off the street, Konrad—not off the street. Don't ever forget that again. [*She sits down on the bench.*]

KONRAD. If you want to call a spade a club— [*He shrugs and laughs unpleasantly.*]

BUNNY. I know the names of things—don't worry. And I'm not ashamed of anything I've done. [*His anger has evaporated and he stands there regarding her with an expression in which admiration and affection are blended.*] I've had to fight my own way ever since I was a child, and it's been pretty tough—a lot of it.

KONRAD. Still things come out pretty good for you, Bunny.

BUNNY. You think so?

KONRAD. Well— [*He squares his shoulders, smirks and poses.*]

BUNNY. Yes. [*She ponders.*] Yes, I suppose so. [*And she laughs shortly to herself.*] It—it all depends on what you want.

KONRAD. [*After a pause in a very conciliatory tone.*] Bunny.

BUNNY. [*Without raising her head.*] Yes?

KONRAD. I—I'm sorry, Bunny. [*She does not look up.*] I didn't mean those things I said. You know I wouldn't hurt you for the world. I'm jealous, that's the trouble

and what can I do? I can't help that. And—and I lose my temper. Ach!—Well— [*Still she does not look up. He sits down beside her and she draws a bit away.*] I'm sorry, Bunny, and I ask you to forgive me.

BUNNY. [*Wearily.*] Yes. All right.

KONRAD. You aren't angry with me now?

BUNNY. No.

KONRAD. [*Taking her hand in both of his.*] I—I love you so much, Bunny. I am so mad about you. It just drives me crazy if I even think of losing you.

BUNNY. [*With a harsh laugh.*] There are plenty more like me.

KONRAD. [*Pathetically in earnest.*] No. No. There are no more for me. You are the last, Bunny. [*He presses her hand to his lips and she draws away from him with a look of aversion in her eyes.*] I—I am getting old. [*There is a catch in his voice, and he strikes his breast with his fist and rises to his feet to cover his emotion.*] Yes, I am getting old. It is no longer something which one can deny. And I can't be alone. I can't—I can't. [*She looks at him curiously.*] You don't understand that, Bunny. No. But it's terrible—terrible. You see—always—all my life I have loved women—beautiful women—young women—youth and beauty—yes. That is my life: youth, beauty—loving it—having it—possession—possession—and— [*Wistfully.*] You stay with me, Bunny? [*She averts her eyes.*] Ah, yes, say, please—tell me that you will!

BUNNY. [*She stands up quickly with an awkward little laugh.*] You're getting sentimental, Konrad.

KONRAD. So? Yes. [*Bitterly.*] Sentimental! That is the trouble with me. I am sentimental. Sentimental—Ah—Hah! [*He sighs and sits down on the bench with his elbows on the table and his chin cupped in his hands. And now MARIANA hurries in carrying with both hands a big iron spider. PETER is at her heels dressed now in white duck breeches, a white vest such as barkeepers wore in the long ago, and a chef's cap set rakishly over one ear. And it is somehow a sacrilege: this comic costume on this man. MARIANA hurries to the grill and rests the spider on the crane above the fire and busies herself about the food.*]

PETER. [*Shouting over his shoulder.*] Dinner! Dinner! [*Noticing BUNNY.*] Oh, there you are, Bunny! We were wondering—

MARIANA. Mr. Doremy!

PETER. Yes. [*He hurries to the grill.*]

MARIANA. The chowder's in this kettle. [*Indicating different pots and pans.*] Potatoes, capolini, asparagus. The coffee's done. It can just keep warm there. And— [*The murmur of approaching voices.*] the roast is finished. I have even sliced it.

PETER. I see.—I see.

[*They come in now, chattering at a great rate. MILDRED leads with MRS. PAYNE, then BOOTS and ELLEN, then MR. WITBECK and MR. PAYNE.*]

ACT I]

SPINDRIFT

51

MRS. PAYNE.

I'm just too thrilled for words. I shall always remember this day.

ELLEN.

When does it start?

BOOTS.

From New York on the twenty-third of next month.

ELLEN.

Do you have a cabin to yourself?

BOOTS.

Well not unless you want to buy two tickets.

ELLEN.

But suppose you got in with some one you didn't like.

BOOTS.

I guess I could grin and bear it.

ELLEN.

But if they were disagreeable?

MR. WITBECK.

I walked right into his private office and I said to him just these very words: "You may be President of this bank, young man, but let me tell you something: I had an account with this institution when you were a kid in diapers. I've banked here for forty years and I've never asked a favor of you because I've never needed one until today. Well you take your one-horse bank and jump in the river with it."

MR. PAYNE.

I beg your pardon.—Oh yes, my dear! Er—very interesting.

MILDRED.

So glad you like it. Of course it isn't nearly finished. I have such interesting plans.

MRS. PAYNE.

I think everything is perfect.—And Mr. Doremey!—Isn't that delightful and naive?—Arnold! Arnold dear! Do look at Mr. Doremey.

MILDRED.

Will you sit there, Mrs. Payne?

MRS. PAYNE.
Thank you.

BOOTS.
Let 'em try it.

MR. WITBECK.
And I walked
out.

MILDRED.

More comfortable
with one's
back against the
wall.—And Mr.
Payne, there.—
Why, Bunny,
where did you
come from?—

ELLEN.
Are you sure to
go?

MR. PAYNE.
And quite right
too—quite right.

MR. WITBECK.
A smart aleck
banker gives me
a pain.

No, no, dear, I'm betting even
keep your place, money on it now,
right where you but you never can
are.—Konrad, tell. I've lost so
over there please many sure things
next to Mrs. —that couldn't
Payne. lose.

MR. PAYNE.
Yes, and it's re-
markable how
many of them
have swelled
heads. Why just
the other day—

PETER. [*Shouting.*] Sit down! Sit down everybody!
The chowder's coming up. [*He is ladling the chowder
into bowls which MARIANA holds on a tray. The guests
are taking their places. They will be finally seated in
this order: At the end of the table toward the grill,
PETER. At his left MRS. PAYNE, KONRAD, ELLEN, MR.
WITBECK. At the end MILDRED, then MR. PAYNE, BOOTS,
YOUNG PETER, BUNNY, FRANCIS, and so back to PETER.
There is a general air of respectable hilarity such as
cocktails before dinner do provoke. YOUNG PETER ap-
pears on the terrace and comes unnoticed down the
steps.*]

FRANCIS. [*Capering in with a huge cocktail shaker.*] A wreath! A wreath of laurel for Dionysus! Good Lord! Bunny—and Konrad, too! See here, where have you turtle doves been cooing? Well, of course— Ha, ha! But you haven't had a drink. [*And he lurches into a place at Bunny's side, and pours out cocktails, laughing and chattering all the while. He is already quite drunk.*]

PETER. [*Shouting above the racket.*] You'd better put the light on, someone.

[*And someone does, for the lantern springs into life, and throws down a soft warm glow upon the table and the guests.*]

MRS. PAYNE. It's just like fairyland. Really, too lovely.

MILDRED. Are we all here? [*She glances around the table.*] But where's Young Peter?

YOUNG PETER. [*In the shadow at her back.*] I'm here, Mother. [*And he steps into the light.*]

KONRAD. [*Pausing in the act of sitting down, and glaring across the table.*] So? Young Peter? I didn't see you before.

YOUNG PETER. [*Glaring back at him, and with equal shortness.*] I haven't seen you either.

KONRAD. Humph! [*And he sits down grim and watchful.*]

MILDRED. Why don't you sit down, dear?

YOUNG PETER. [*Stammering.*] I—I—

[*BUNNY has not turned her head or noticed him.*]

MILDRED. Well, there's a place for you. Right there between Bunny and Boots.

KONRAD. [*Starting to his feet.*] There's more room over here perhaps.

MILDRED. It doesn't matter, Konrad. [*He resumes his seat grumbling something, and YOUNG PETER steps over the bench and sits down like a ramrod with his elbows tight at his sides. MARIANA is serving the chowder now, and PETER walks slowly towards the table.*]

MRS. PAYNE. I was looking at your picture, Mr. Doremy—on the terrace.

PETER. Oh, yes? [*He sits down.*] It's—it's only a sketch.

MRS. PAYNE. [*Soulfully.*] I thought it was wonderful.

PETER. [*Mumbling.*] So glad you like it.

MRS. PAYNE. The feeling of the surf,—the force and power of the breaking wave.

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Well, I don't know—I—I didn't finish it. It's just a study.

MRS. PAYNE. I should love to see your collection, and to own one of your pictures too. [*Hastily.*] That is, of course if there are some for sale.

[*MR. WITBECK appears to choke on the chowder and makes strange noises in his throat.*]

KONRAD. Are you a painter, Madam?

MRS. PAYNE. [*Modestly.*] As a girl I used to paint—on china.

KONRAD. [*Stifling a groan.*] So? [*There is a dead and hideous silence. Not a spoon stirs.*]

MRS. PAYNE. [*Fluttering.*] It was the fashion then. All the young ladies painted. But I should love now to do something serious,—something really worth while. I think we should all try to do something in this beautiful world, be it ever so little. [*And she adds very lamely.*] Don't you?

KONRAD. Humph! [*A spoon rattles and the agony is over. Other spoons begin to function, and voices to swell.*] When do you go back to school? Eh, Young Peter?

YOUNG PETER. [*Almost savagely.*] Tomorrow morning.

KONRAD. Humph! [*He smiles. YOUNG PETER'S left hand hangs loose behind the bench, and BUNNY'S right hand hangs there too, a few inches space between them. Her hand has moved slowly toward his and at this moment touches it. He jerks his hand away as if from fire, but hers remains, the fingers closed on the edge of the bench.*

KONRAD goes on leveling a fork for emphasis.] When I was a boy in Europe—

FRANCIS. [*Loudly. His tongue is thickening now.*] Oh my God! He's going to be sentimental— [*And he leans far over the table, shouting above the rattle and the voices.*] Look here, Mr. Lane!—I say, Mr. Lane— [*The hubbub drowns his voice.*]

KONRAD.

When I was a boy in Europe, at five o'clock on winter mornings—

PETER.

A glass of wine, Konrad?

KONRAD. Yes. Thanks.—As I was saying: When I was a boy in Europe—

MRS. PAYNE.

I should love to see your place, Miss Witbeck—

ELLEN.

I'd be glad to have you come any time.

BOOTS.

I suppose you'll come up to town to see me off, Ellen. It'll be a big day for me.

MR. WITBECK.

Exactly. A man spends two thirds of his life trying to solve the economic problem, and when he gets it solved, he don't know what to do with himself. It happens every day. The world is full of it.

MR. PAYNE.

Yes. Yes, indeed.

[YOUNG PETER'S *hand slides back bit by bit, touches at last the other hand, and stays there.*]

FRANCIS. [*At the top of his voice.*] Bedlam! Bedlam! I say, look here, Mr. Lane, for God's sake! I want to say something. I want to ask a question. What have we got to do with economic problems?—Good Lord!

MR. WITBECK. [*Jumping to his feet and thumping the table in a great rage.*] Don't you be impudent to me, Francis Doremy!—Don't you dare!

FRANCIS. Impudent?—But good Lord! Look here, I only asked a question—I only want to know—

MR. WITBECK. I said that when you take the economic factor out of a man's life you are likely to take out the only excuse he has for living, and I—

FRANCIS. Oh my God, Papa Witbeck, what a notion! Well, of course, I know nothing of business but see here—

MR. WITBECK. [*Choking with fury.*] I won't talk to you. You—you're drunk. [*And he sits down and resumes his conversation with MR. PAYNE.*]

FRANCIS. [*Subsiding abruptly with a tremendous shrug.*] Oh well—of course—that's an argument—an argument— [*He slumps, his elbows on the table and his head in his hands, and he goes on shrugging and muttering to himself.*] Certainly—of course—hum—
—well—

[*BUNNY'S hand is open now, the fingers feeling lightly; and now the two hands come to grips with fingers intertwined. The curtain begins to descend.*]

KONRAD.

MILDRED.

MR. PAYNE.

When I was a boy in Europe, at five o'clock on winter mornings— Say, Young Peter, I am talking to you.—So. When I was a boy in—

Well I know but if you go to India, Boots, you must bring me a stone Buddha for the garden.
ELLEN.
Oh! Are you really going to India?

Strange young man.

MR. WITBECK.
He's a damned, infernal nuisance. Nothing but talk, talk, talk, and what does it amount to?

[*The curtain reaches the stage.*]

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

A fine reproduction of an old Spanish room with a vaulted ceiling, tremendously thick walls finished in rough plaster, and a tiled floor. The arch topped doors of rough planks, iron strapped and bolted, are deeply recessed in the walls. There are a pair of them in the center of the right wall giving access to some sort of living room; and there is one in the left wall, near the front, which leads to the dining room. Just above this door is a huge hooded fireplace of stone. The room is really not a room at all but a sort of vestibule which this new fireplace has made more habitable. At the back the right hand corner is cut off diagonally to accommodate a deep-arched opening leading to the terrace. There is an iron grill in the top of this arch, and an iron gridded lantern swings from a bracket on the terrace side, swaying gently in the breeze and casting crazy shadows on the floor within the arch. Against the back wall shallow stone steps rise to a long, low landing edged with an iron handrail. This landing passes through an arched opening in the left wall and leads to an upper floor. A rich piece of brocade curtains this entrance, and another of rose color is draped over the handrail. A niche in the wall above the landing contains a handsome porcelain vase. As to furniture there is almost nothing, three or four chairs, a bench, and a small table, all rare antiques and in the period to which the room

belongs. There is a black fur rug before the deep bellied hearth on which a fire smolders; and a leather bellows hangs in the chimney angle. The lighting is from torch-like sconces in which the bulbs are sunken and invisible. It is near midnight. There is soft light in the room and brilliant moon-light on the terrace.

FRANCIS, *in evening clothes, is sitting on a chair near the fire. He has a half empty tumbler in his hand, and he is drunk to the point of thick, incoherent muttering. His face is lined and haggard, and he contorts it, and gestures vaguely, and shrugs his shoulders. The man is in an agony of soul which is not less real because it happens to be maudlin. At length he drains his glass and slumps back in his chair, groaning, and struggling with bitter, drunken thoughts.*

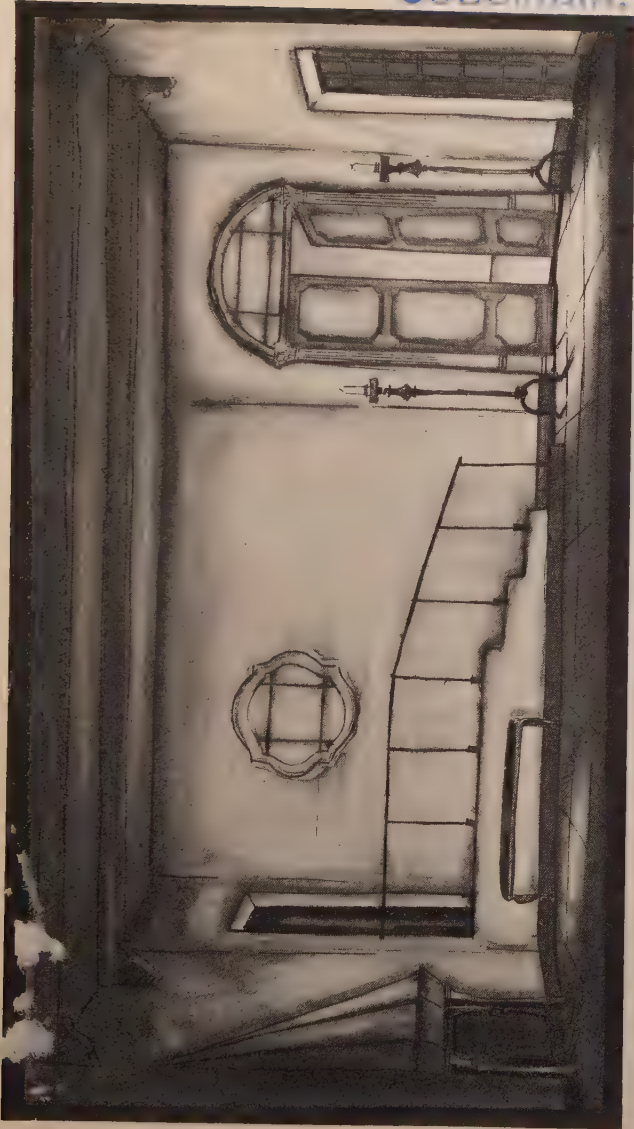
MARIANA *comes from the adjoining room with a tray on which is a decanter of brandy.*

FRANCIS. What's that? Who's there? [*He stares at her with blinking eyes.*] Oh, it's you! [*She hurries across the room toward the opposite door anxious to avoid him, but he gets up staggering and intercepts her.*] Look here, Mari-Mariana,—wait! Well of course— [*He laughs and reaches for the decanter.*]

MARIANA. [*Holding the tray away from him.*] Please, Mr. Francis.—Your brother said I shouldn't give you any more.

FRANCIS. [*Capturing the tray.*] Ha-ha! Well, of course—he would. Don't be silly! Peter,—good old Peter! [*And he fills his glass, gulps the liquor down, and back to his chair.*]

STEPHENS COLLEGE,
COLUMBIA, MO.



ACT II
Designed by Wm. Kline

MARIANA. You shouldn't drink like that. It—it will kill you. [*He laughs.*] And it is wrong.

FRANCIS. [*Staring at her stupidly.*] Wrong?

MARIANA. Yes, wrong. A sin against yourself and against God.

FRANCIS. Sin?

MARIANA. If you would go to church Father Santos would tell you.

FRANCIS. Church? [*He blinks his eyes.*] Do you believe in God, Mari-Mariana?

MARIANA. [*Shocked.*] Oh, what a question! I go to Mass every Sunday. Tomorrow morning at six o'clock—

FRANCIS. [*Interrupting with drunken gravity.*] My mother went to church. She—she believed in God. But that's all gone now. Finished.—Gone— [*His voice trails away.*]

MARIANA. Your mother wouldn't like to see you now.

FRANCIS. How's that? [*Her words penetrate his brain, and he pleads half sobbing.*] No, no. Don't!—You can't say things like that. It isn't kind. It isn't fair. It—it's cheap—do you hear me? Cheap, and—and sentimental. [*He breaks off pulling at his collar.*] Ah, but it's close tonight,—close! There's no air to breathe.—Ah!—ah!

MARIANA. It's earthquake weather, that's the reason.

FRANCIS. Earthquake?—Earthquake weather? [*He laughs.*] Don't be silly, Mari-Mariana.

MARIANA. The people who are born here, they should know. And before the big earthquake it was just like this all day.

FRANCIS. Earthquakes! Ha-ha-ha! Old wives tales!—Stuff, I tell you, stuff! Ha-ha!— [*He stops abruptly in the midst of a laugh. An idea strikes him and takes form. He thinks aloud unconscious of the girl.*] Still one could write a play about an earthquake.—It's not been done I think.—Dramatic, eh? And symbolism,—yes,—well of course—of course.— [*His voice is tense now and vibrant from this creative flash.*] The bowels of the earth turned inside out.—Convulsion of nature—and of life—of life.—That's the idea, that.—Everything changed.—All upside things turn right side up, and right side things turn down.—Convulsion—drama—drama.—A play—a play— [*His voice subsides to muttering and the words are no longer intelligible.*]

MARIANA. [*Leaning forward in an effort to hear.*] What do you say? [*He shakes his head irritably and motions her away.*] Well— [*She sighs and moves to pick up the tray. And now a figure appears silently in the terrace entrance. It is YOUNG PETER dressed in a plain dark suit, a cap pulled down over his eyes. He reconnoiters the room cautiously but does not see FRANCIS slouched in a chair the back of which is toward him.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Softly.*] Mariana!

MARIANA. [*Startled.*] Oh, who's there?—Why where did you come from?—I thought—

YOUNG PETER. Hush! Don't talk so loud.

MARIANA. But I thought you were at college.

YOUNG PETER. Yes of course. I—I just came back to-night for—something.

MARIANA. But how could you come so late? It's nearly midnight.

YOUNG PETER. I came on the night train.

MARIANA. Oh!—But how did you get out here?

YOUNG PETER. The hotel bus was at the station. It brought— [*He hesitates.*] It brought me out.

MARIANA. Oh! [*Anxiously.*] You didn't get fired from school for something, Peter?

YOUNG PETER. No.

MARIANA. Your father would feel terrible if—

YOUNG PETER. Nonsense, I tell you!—See here, what's going on? [*He points to the doors.*]

MARIANA. Oh just some company, that's all!

YOUNG PETER. Is Mr. Brandes here?

MARIANA. Yes.

YOUNG PETER. [*Pondering.*] Hum—

MARIANA. But not his wife. I heard him say: She's gone to the city shopping.

YOUNG PETER. [*Absently.*] Hum—yes—

MARIANA. Why don't you go in?

YOUNG PETER. No. I'll wait until they've gone.

MARIANA. [*Suspiciously.*] You're acting kind of funny I think.

YOUNG PETER. Nonsense! [*He turns to go.*] See here, don't tell any one you saw me.

MARIANA. [*Doubtfully.*] Well, I—

YOUNG PETER. Please, Mariana.

MARIANA. [*Yielding.*] Well.

FRANCIS. [*Abruptly terminating his thought with a deep groan.*] Oh God! Empty! Sterile! Nothing! Nothing! [*He stumbles to his feet and catches sight of YOUNG PETER who, rooted to the floor for an instant by amazement, has turned now to fly.*] Who's there? Stop! Stop, I say! [*He reels to the steps and supports himself against the railing.*] Ah! So it's you, Young Peter. Well wait! I want to talk to you—to you.

[MARIANA sighs, picks up the tray and goes out.]

YOUNG PETER. [*Stammering.*] I'm sorry. I—I haven't time. [*And he backs toward the terrace.*]

FRANCIS. [*Raising his voice.*] Stop!—Time? [*He laughs bitterly.*] What do you know of time? You are young. Life is ahead of you, a glittering thing of jewels to be plucked like cherries from a tree.—But take care! [*There is passionate anguish in his voice.*] The years sweep over you so fast and leave you empty and burned out. One day the sun goes down never to rise again.—Take care! Take care!

YOUNG PETER. [*Mumbling.*] Yes.—Yes, I will. [*His eyes stray in apprehension to the doors.*]

FRANCIS. Do you think that I was never young? And your father too? Youth never thinks of that. We've all been young, we Doremys. And we've sat our lives out on the beach and watched our ships go down. Ship after ship,—till there's nothing left.—Do you know what that means, Young Peter?

YOUNG PETER. [*He has hardly heard a word of it.*] Yes, I—I think so.

FRANCIS. All my life I've been *going* to do something—something,—do you understand? The Doremys are all like that. They've always been like that. They're always *going* to do something, but they never start until it's too late, and then— [*He laughs bitterly.*] They can't—they can't—they can't. Do you understand? They can only eat their hearts out then, that's all.

YOUNG PETER. Yes.

FRANCIS. And you, Young Peter, take care! Do something before it is too late! Something, do you hear? [*His voice rises to a shout.*] Something to save yourself—something to buy the Doremys out of purgatory,—out of consuming hell.—Redeem us, Peter.—Oh, for Christ's sake, redeem us! [*And in this mad outburst he beats his clenched fists against his breast. The door to the adjoining room opens. In a flash YOUNG PETER has darted to the terrace and is gone, and OLD PETER comes in closing the door behind him.*]

PETER. [*By the door. Grim and so deadly serious.*] You have been shouting like a mad man. [*His evening clothes are baggy and ill pressed.*]

FRANCIS. [*Confused.*] What? What's that? Oh! I was talking to Young Peter here. [*He turns and blinks his eyes.*]

PETER. You have been dreaming.

FRANCIS. Dreaming? No.

PETER. Young Peter is a hundred miles away.

FRANCIS. No.—He was here just now.—I told him he must do something— [*His voice rises again.*] Something to buy us out of hell. Do you hear, Peter?

PETER. [*Very quietly, but his lips are tight.*] Yes, I hear.

FRANCIS. You and me, Peter, both of us. [*He stamps his foot.*] Do you hear me?—Do you hear?

PETER. Yes, I hear.

FRANCIS. [*Muttering.*] Well, of course—of course— [*He shrugs, droops, staggers to the table and picks up his glass. PETER strides across the room and jerks the glass from his lips.*] Peter!—Don't be silly! [*He laughs foolishly.*]

PETER. [*Bitterly.*] You fool! You fool! [*And he puts the glass down on the table.*]

FRANCIS. [*Sinking limply into a chair.*] Well of course—of course—what an idea! Stupid! Stupid!

PETER. At least you could try to save yourself.

FRANCIS. Save? There's nothing left to save. A shell,—a husk— [*A brooding pause.*] We can strip off our masks,—mine and yours too,—and be what we are among ourselves. [*A pause.*] Mother was proud of us. Do you remember that?

PETER. Yes.

FRANCIS. She said we would do something in the world. She was proud of her boys. [*His voice breaks.*] Oh my God! Just think of that! [*He gets up and staggers toward the terrace, turning at the arch to shout.*] I'm glad she died. [*PETER stands up with a sharp intake of breath.*] Yes, glad! Glad!—I'm glad she didn't live to see us broken on the wheel.—Glad!—

PETER. For God's sake hold your tongue!

FRANCIS. [*Shouting.*] The Doremys!—That's what they're like. [*He points through the arch.*] Like spindrift, do you see?—The froth and spray cast off by life and blown away—to nothing. [*He laughs wildly, reels through the archway, and is gone.* PETER walks slowly to the arch, leans there with folded arms, and watches the figure out of sight.]

[KONRAD, in evening clothes, comes in from the adjoining room. PETER turns to face him.]

KONRAD. [*Jabbing his thumb over his shoulder.*] You should be in there. They are selling your house over your head.

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Yes?

KONRAD. You are a fool to sell your house, my friend.

PETER. Why do you say that?

KONRAD. Why?—Why because a house is like a woman : one becomes attached to it. [*He paces restlessly across the room.*]

PETER. [*Half to himself.*] Yes, I've thought of that.

KONRAD. And the little man with the bad stomach, what will he do here?—He will shrivel up and die. [PETER *stares at him with knitted brow.*] At sixty one doesn't learn new tricks.

PETER. No.

KONRAD. Look at Witbeck! Do you think he is happy here?

PETER. No.

KONRAD. He frets and mopes his life away. There is nothing for him here—nothing. When a man is finished he should die and have it over with.

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. [*Bitterly.*] But it doesn't happen. One goes on living—living— [*Abruptly.*] Excuse me, I am going home. [*And he strides toward the terrace.*]

PETER. But—

KONRAD. No, please.—You must make my apologies to Mildred.—I—I am restless and uneasy. [*He turns away but pauses at the entrance.*] I thought she would be home this afternoon. Else I would not have accepted your invitation.

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. [*Coming a few steps back.*] She said she would come this afternoon, but she didn't.

PETER. Perhaps she was delayed.

KONRAD. She could telephone or telegraph.

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. It takes a moment only.—She has no consideration for me,—none.

PETER. There may have been some reason.

KONRAD. Bah!—It is always with such thoughts that one deludes oneself.

PETER. She may have come on the night train.

KONRAD. No.—But I go home and see.

PETER. You could telephone to her hotel.

KONRAD. I did that this afternoon.

PETER. Ah!

KONRAD. She has left, they say, in the morning. She isn't there. [PETER finds nothing more to say. After a moment he goes on.] She drives me mad, that girl. I am half crazy now. I think of everything. I see her in some fellow's arms, his lips on hers—

PETER. Ah no! No!

KONRAD. No doubt I am a fool, but all the same I think these things. I can't help that.

PETER. You shouldn't. No.

KONRAD. If I were young again, then I don't give a damn. The world is full of pretty girls. If one goes, another takes her place. But I am old—old—[*His voice rises passionately.*] Like Witbeck I am finished, but—I still hang on. [*He laughs harshly.*]

PETER. You—you imagine things.

KONRAD. [*Bitterly.*] So?—What do you know of what goes on in me?—Our lives are no closer than the poles. You have a wife who stays by you until you die. And you have a son to—to finish the work you have begun.

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. And I? I must pay someone to pretend to love me. A cheap, second rate thing that is, but it's all I've got. A man takes memories and makes believe they are alive, but he don't fool himself. [*A pause.*] I talk too much. What good is talk? Good night. [*He turns to go.*]

PETER. If you should see Francis on the road—

KONRAD. He's drunk again, eh?

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. No fear, he will get safely to his house. When he is drunk he walks with God. [*He laughs again shortly, and bitterly, strides through the archway, and is gone.*]
PETER sits down in the chair by the fire and buries his face in his hands. A few moments pass. The doors to the adjoining room are thrown open and MRS. PAYNE comes in escorted by MILDRED on one side and BOOTS

on the other. MR. PAYNE in faultless dinner coat brings up the rear. MRS. PAYNE is resplendent. The other women are appropriately but inexpensively gowned.]

BOOTS. [*Ecstatically as the doors open.*] It's settled, Peter, everything.

[*And PETER stands up awkwardly and vaguely by his chair. MR. PAYNE strolls about examining things afresh with an air of mild, proprietary interest.*]

MILDRED. [*Making animated explanations to MRS. PAYNE.*] Now you see this fireplace, that's what I mean, it's new.

BOOTS. Ducky!

MILDRED. It's the chimney you see from the terrace.

MRS. PAYNE. Oh, yes!

MILDRED. It makes this place quite livable.

BOOTS. Cozy!

MRS. PAYNE. [*Examining the fireplace.*] Charming!—So artistic!

MILDRED. [*Doubtfully.*] Well, I don't know—

BOOTS. Oh it is! Simply corking!

MILDRED. I was a little disappointed in the chimney.

BOOTS. Well, it draws.

MILDRED. Yes, of course. But I mean the lines. It—it's a little sharp and—and severe. We thought, Mr. Watts and I, we'd knock it down some day and do it over.

BOOTS. But there's no real need to.

MILDRED. Oh, no! But it's so interesting to knock things down and do them over,—really such fun! I think you'll enjoy it, Mrs. Payne.

MRS. PAYNE. I know I shall. I'm so excited, Mrs. Dormy, I can hardly wait to begin.

MILDRED. I have a great portfolio full of sketches and suggestions. Things I've planned to do here and there. I'll give them all to you.

[MR. PAYNE. *is listening now with an expression of mild anxiety.*]

MRS. PAYNE. So sweet of you!

MILDRED. Well of course they won't be of any use to me now. Won't you come and look at them? They're in my room. [*She takes MRS. PAYNE'S arm and leads her toward the steps.*]

MRS. PAYNE. I'd love it.

MILDRED. I really think you'll find them useful. Now for example, I've always intended some day to tear down that wing entirely. [*She waves her arm expansively.*] It's the first thing I built and there are flaws in the sincerity. It's not exactly true to type. I have complete drawings—

[*And three pairs of eyes are following them until they disappear from sight. Both the men sigh involuntarily and glance at each other and quickly avert their eyes. They have this in common that, though for totally different reasons, neither of them is ever quite at ease.*]

BOOTS. [*Briskly.*] Well, we might as well get down to business, eh?

MR. PAYNE. Er—yes.

PETER [*Vaguely.*] Oh, yes! [*To MR. PAYNE.*] Won't you sit down?

MR. PAYNE. Thank you. [*He sits down stiffly, and PETER resumes his seat by the fire.*]

BOOTS. Now, Mr. Payne— [*And she smiles encouragingly, and sits down between them.*]

MR. PAYNE. Oh, yes! Well—er— [*He pauses to arrange his preamble. Conservative business men like MR. PAYNE are bound to observe conventional formulæ.*] I was about to say—er, Mr. Doremy, er—my wife, Mrs. Payne has taken a great fancy to this—er—little community. [*PETER murmurs something.*] You see, she's always been interested in—er—art and—er—things like that. [*PETER nods.*] And so—er—well the fact is—she's quite determined to settle down here.

BOOTS. [*Bursting with impatience.*] There you are, Peter! There's the whole thing in a nutshell. We're all agreed on—

MR. PAYNE. [*Holding up his hand for silence.*] I beg your pardon. [*After all there are certain amenities. He frowns, gives his displeasure time to sink in, and goes on.*] I really don't quite see what I shall do with myself here. My—er—interests have been of such a different kind—

PETER. [*Nodding.*] Yes.

BOOTS. You'll love it, Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE. [*Annoyed.*] No doubt.

BOOTS. Just look at Mr. Witbeck! Look what's it done to him! He's changed completely since he came here. Hasn't he, Peter?

PETER. [*Awkwardly.*] I—I don't know.

BOOTS. Well, he has, of course. An outdoor life, there's nothing like it, Mr. Payne. You'll be another man in six months' time. I've seen 'em come on stretchers and—

MR. PAYNE. Yes, yes, please— [*And he holds up his hand again.*] As I was about to say, Mr. Doremy, I think I might prefer Florida myself. It's—er—nearer things, and there is—er—more going on, you see.

PETER. Yes.

BOOTS. You can only live there three months in the year. You'd be amazed the number of people that have come from Florida out here.

MR. PAYNE. [*Slightly raising his voice.*] But Mrs. Payne has always wanted—er—something of this sort.

PETER. [*Nodding very solemnly.*] Yes, I—I see.

MR. PAYNE. [*He takes a paper from his pocket.*] I've just drawn up a little memorandum, an—er—agreement on your part to sell. If you will look it over and sign it— [*PETER takes the paper and stares at it.*] It's purely a formality—er—pending the delivery of the deed.

PETER. Yes.

MR. PAYNE. You see, I mention house and contents excluding personal effects, wearing apparel, jewelry, silver, linen, and—er—of course, your pictures.

PETER. [*Laughing harshly.*] Oh yes, of course, my pictures! [*And he sits down at the table and scrawls his signature with MR. PAYNE'S fountain pen.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Taking the paper and producing another.*] And here is the check.

BOOTS. Please— [*She takes the agreement from his hand and scans it carefully.*]

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Check?

MR. PAYNE. The check for five thousand dollars as advance payment,—to—er—seal the bargain.

PETER. Oh yes! [*He takes it now, and stands staring at it with knitted brows.*]

MR. PAYNE. The deed can be drawn next week, I presume.

BOOTS. [*Returning the agreement.*] I'll get it out on Monday, Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE. Hum yes. I—er—specified possession within ten days.

BOOTS. You'll get it. They've only to pack their trunks. [*MRS. PAYNE. and MILDRED return, the latter lugging a huge scrap book under her arm.*]

MILDRED. [*Chattering as she enters.*] You must always get sand from the river bottom. The beach sand is so coarse. When you make cement of it the rain will drive right through. We had such a time at first till Mr. Watts discovered what it was.

MRS. PAYNE. Beach sand. Beach sand. I shan't forget.

BOOTS. [*Waving her arms wildly.*] Signed, sealed, and delivered, Mildred. Spindrift is sold.

MILDRED. Oh! [*And she sits down abruptly.*] Dear me! Of course I knew it was all settled, but it is a shock. [*She laughs weakly.*]

MRS. PAYNE. My dear, I know exactly how you feel.

MILDRED. It's—it's like parting with a child.—I didn't think I should have cared so much. [*She touches her handkerchief to the corners of her eyes.*]

BOOTS. Everyone's like that when they've been here six months.

MILDRED. I never would have dreamed of selling the place except on Young Peter's account. He's going abroad to study you know; and—well, we're such a close little family, we couldn't bear the thought of separation.

[*And now MR. WATTS, looking much as he did when we last saw him save that he is minus canvas bag and trowel, walks into the room from the terrace; and takes off his hat, and clears his throat, and clears it once again quite loudly.*]

MILDRED. Oh!—Why, it's Mr. Watts!

MR. WATTS. Yes, ma'am.

PETER. Won't you come in?

MR. WATTS. Much obliged, Mr. Doremy, but I didn't just drop in to make a social call.

PETER. Oh!

MR. WATTS. I was coming back from a meeting of our Beethoven club in town and I met Mr. Brandes down the road a piece. He asked me to come over.

PETER [*Vaguely.*] Oh, yes?

MR. WATTS. I'm mighty sorry to disturb you folks and interrupt your party but, well, it seems there's been an accident.

PETER and BOOTS. An accident?

MILDRED. Oh, what? What?

MR. WATTS. It's Mr. Witbeck.

PETER. Witbeck! Good God, what has he done?

MR. WATTS. It seems he's fell over that cliff beyond his house. [*There is a gasp of horror from his auditors.*]

PETER. Fell? You say he fell over the cliff?

MR. WATTS. I'm only saying what they said to me. His daughter says he *fell*.

PETER. [*Muttering to himself.*] Yes.—Yes.

BOOTS. But how did it happen, Mr. Watts?

MR. WATTS. She says he went for a walk. It got kind of late and he didn't come back. So after while she went to look for him. And she looked over the edge of that cliff.

PETER. But why? Why should she look there?

MR. WATTS. Well, sir, now I can't tell you that, Mr. Doremy. But anyway she saw him lying there in the moonlight.

PETER. [*Groaning.*] Ah! Ah!

MR. PAYNE. And—er—is he badly hurt?

MR. WATTS. Well, now I think likely he is.

MR. PAYNE. Dear me!

MR. WATTS. It's two hundred feet over that cliff and boulders at the bottom. I don't suppose there's a bone in his body that isn't smashed.

[MR. PAYNE *sits down abruptly with a deep sigh.*]

MRS. PAYNE. Do you mean that he is dead?

MR. WATTS. Yes ma'am, he's dead. [*He turns to PETER.*] The folks at the hotel are coming down with ropes. They'll tend to everything.

MILDRED. But Ellen, poor Ellen, what of her?

MR. WATTS. Mr. Brandes is bringing her down here. He said his wife was away.

MILDRED. Yes, yes, I know.

MR. WATTS. He sent me on ahead so you'd sort of be prepared.

MILDRED. Oh dear! Such terrible things do happen in this world!

MR. WATTS. [*Cheerfully.*] Yes, ma'am, that's right.

MILDRED. I must fix a room for her. [*And she sighs and drags herself slowly up the steps. PETER goes out to the terrace and stands there waiting.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Brooding, half to himself.*] This is—er—a great shock to me. I—er— [*He hesitates. Figures of speech are not common to his thought.*] It—er—is like a shadow.

MRS. PAYNE. [*Disapprovingly.*] A shadow?

MR. PAYNE. Why, yes. I—er, that is— [*He breaks off lamely.*]

MRS. PAYNE. You mustn't be morbid, dear. It isn't helpful.

MR. PAYNE. No, er—I suppose not.

BOOTS. But, of course, Mr. Payne, a thing like this could happen anywhere.

MR. WATTS. Anywhere where there was a cliff.

BOOTS. Well, I don't mean that of course. I mean accidents you know. Why in New York now I'll bet people are falling off of things every minute of the day.

[*And ELLEN comes in now supported by KONRAD on one side and PETER on the other. She is white and dry-eyed.*]

They put her down in a chair and she sits there rigid and motionless staring at the floor. The others stand about awkwardly, exchanging whispered monosyllables like guests at a funeral.]

MILDRED. [*Flying down the steps.*] Ellen! My poor child! [*She kneels beside the girl and puts her arms around her. She is deeply affected and unable to restrain her tears, but ELLEN is rigid and unresponsive.*]

KONRAD. [*In a lowered voice to PETER.*] I must go back there now. They are working with some ropes. It's quite a job.

PETER. Yes.

MRS. PAYNE. Perhaps we can do something. Our car is here.

KONRAD. A car? So. Yes, we could use it.

[*And MR. and MRS. PAYNE and BOOTS and MR. WATTS file out to the terrace whispering among themselves.*]

PETER. Do you need me?

KONRAD. No. There's plenty there. [*Motioning toward the girl.*] She comes out all right bye and bye, I guess.

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. That old man, he got to be an awful trial.

PETER. Yes.

KONRAD. So. [*He shrugs and turns toward the door.*]

PETER. [*Abruptly.*] Do you think he—fell?

KONRAD. [*He hesitates.*] She said so. [*He purses his lips, shrugs his shoulders, and goes out.*]

PETER. [*Muttering to himself.*] Yes.—Yes. [*He stands near the entrance pondering.*]

MILDRED. Won't you take a little drop of wine, Ellen dear? [*ELLEN shakes her head.*] It will brace you up. I know it will.

ELLEN. [*Stolidly.*] No.

MILDRED. Or shall I make you a cup of tea? Nice hot tea?

ELLEN. I couldn't. Nothing.

MILDRED. [*Sighing.*] Well— [*She stands up and goes over to PETER. Whispering.*] Perhaps I had better take her upstairs.

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Yes.

ELLEN. [*Suddenly in a harsh, dry voice.*] He didn't fall. [*They stare at her.*] I told them that. I didn't want Mr. Watts to know. But— [*She shakes her head mechanically.*] He didn't fall.

MILDRED. Why, Ellen, what do you mean? [*The girl takes a piece of crumpled paper from her breast and hands it to her. She opens it and reads it.*] Oh! [*And she hands it to PETER who reads it and stands there helplessly holding it in his hand.*]

ELLEN. [*In the same lifeless tone.*] He said he was going for a walk. I didn't think anything of that.—He often went to walk at night. [*A pause.*] When I

went to my room I found that paper pinned to my pillow.

MILDRED. [*Moaning.*] Oh, Ellen!

ELLEN. I think my heart stopped beating. For a little while I thought perhaps I should die just from the shock. And then I ran out of the house, and I fell, twice I fell.—I don't know why I ran—nor why I looked over the cliff. I knew what I should see there—at the bottom. [*She shudders and covers her face with her hands. A pause. Suddenly she flings out her hands and her voice rises shrilly.*] Why did he do that, Peter? Why? Why? [*PETER shakes his head.*] Yes, but someone must tell me. That's why I told you, Peter. Because I want to know. I must know. I must. I must. He didn't say, you see. He only wrote those words: "Goodbye, my child." That's all. You are with a person all your life and he goes away and only says "Goodbye." Peter! Peter! Don't you see how terrible that is?—how terrible! [*Her voice is quavering dangerously.*]

PETER. Yes.

ELLEN. I've tried to do my duty, Peter, always—since my mother died. And I was just a child then—just a little child. I gave up my whole life to my father.—Everything I might have had,—that's all behind me now,—I gave it up you see.

PETER. Yes, Ellen.

ELLEN. I could have had a husband, children perhaps—some life, some purpose of my own,—something to

justify myself, but I gave it up long, long ago— Oh, Peter, don't you see?

PETER. Yes, I see.

ELLEN. Well, what good was it? That's what I want to know. My barren, sterile life and all for what? Why did he do it, Peter? Why? Why? [*She searches his face.*] You can tell me, Peter, you can, you must! You—you see into things some way. You know what goes on in people's hearts.

PETER. [*Shaking his head.*] I don't know, Ellen. [*He stares at her for a long moment, then averts his eyes.*] I don't know.

ELLEN. [*Suddenly bursting into tears.*] My father! My poor father! [*She sobs hysterically.*]

MILDRED. [*Flying to her side.*] There, there, dear! Please—please—come, come, you mustn't talk about it any more. [*She helps the girl to her feet and leads her up the steps.*] You must have some rest you know. The strain on your nerves has been so terrible. You must lie down. I've fixed Young Peter's room for you. And I'll bring you a cup of tea bye and bye.

[*They vanish within the house. PETER sits down by the fireplace and reads again the scrap of paper which he is still holding in his hand, and he stares away into space with an expression of tortured brooding. A few moments pass and YOUNG PETER comes noiselessly into the room. He looks about cautiously, advances a few steps, and perceives his father.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Softly.*] Father!

[PETER *turns his head and stares as one who sees a ghost.*]

PETER. Why Peter, my boy— [*He rises from his chair.*]
What are you doing here?

YOUNG PETER. [*Stammering.*] There was something—
I—I wanted to see you, Father.

PETER. Oh!—But how did you get here?—When?

YOUNG PETER. I came up on the night train. The hotel
bus brought me out. I—I was waiting outside until—
until you were alone. [*He twists his cap and shifts his
weight from one foot to the other, a picture of deadly
earnestness.*]

PETER. Oh! [*A pause, anxiously.*] You—you're not
in trouble, my boy?

YOUNG PETER. [*Swallowing hard.*] No, Father.

PETER. Oh! [*A pause.*] I must see about your room.—
Of course we didn't know that you were coming. [*He
moves vaguely toward the steps.*] Your mother's put-
ting Ellen in there.

YOUNG PETER. Ellen?

PETER. Yes.—Oh, of course you didn't know!—Mr.
Witbeck killed himself tonight, Peter.

YOUNG PETER. [*Incredulously.*] Killed himself?

PETER. Yes.—He jumped off the cliff there by his house.

YOUNG PETER. But why? Why did he do that?

PETER. I don't know. I—I'm trying to understand.

YOUNG PETER. He must have been crazy!

PETER. I don't know. I'm not sure.—No. [*He sighs and turns again toward the steps, then pauses uncertainly.*] And, oh, yes, Peter, we—we've sold Spindrift.

YOUNG PETER. [*Shocked.*] Sold Spindrift?

PETER. [*Nodding.*] Yes.—The Paynes, you remember them, they've bought it.

YOUNG PETER. Why did you sell your home?

PETER. [*Awkwardly.*] Why? Well you see,—it—it's got so big now and topheavy, and—and expensive—

YOUNG PETER. And where will you go now?

PETER. [*Heartily.*] Why of course we'll go to Paris, boy, with you.

YOUNG PETER. Oh! [*And he sits down suddenly as if the strength had gone out of his legs.*]

PETER. [*Enthusiasm growing in his voice.*] We'll take a studio there. It may be just the thing I need. In a place like this one gets into a rut.

YOUNG PETER. [*Groaning to himself.*] Oh God!

PETER. I'll help you, and you'll help me. We'll get along, and you'll go far, my boy. I know you will,—I know. I— Well, you see— [*He is very much affected.*] You've got to do something in this world, Peter—something big and fine,—something for both of us. [YOUNG PETER'S chin sinks forward on his breast.] I—well, I'm counting on that.

YOUNG PETER. You sold Spindrifft so that I could go abroad. [*And there is a catch in his voice.*]

PETER. [*In great haste.*] Oh, no!—No. It—it seemed best for all of us.

YOUNG PETER. But you did!—You did! [*And he jumps up and strides across the room.*]

PETER. No. You mustn't think of such a thing. But I must see about your room. It's long past midnight now. [*And he starts toward the steps.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Desperately.*] It doesn't matter, Father,—I—I shan't want it.

PETER. [*Pausing.*] What?

YOUNG PETER. [*Stammering miserably.*] There—there is something I—I want to speak with you about.

PETER. Oh, yes! [*He comes back a few steps.*] And won't tomorrow do?

YOUNG PETER. No, Father.

PETER. Oh! [*A pause. He is vaguely apprehensive now.*] It's Sunday you know. We'll have all day. You—you won't be going back till night.

YOUNG PETER. No, sir. I— [*He touches his dry lips with his tongue.*] I—You see, Father, I'm not going back.

PETER. Oh! [*A pause.*] I don't think I understand.

YOUNG PETER. [*Taking a deep breath.*] I'm not going back to school. I've quit. I'm through.

PETER. Oh! [*The exclamation is passionless and vague, but he grips a chair back and steadies himself against it.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*In feverish haste.*] I've thought about it all a lot, Father. It isn't any sudden, rash decision. I'm not like that. I don't go rushing into things half cocked. You'll see. I'll tell you how I've thought it out.

PETER. [*Dully.*] Wait!—Let me understand. You're not going back to school.

YOUNG PETER. No, Father, I—

PETER. [*Raising his hand.*] Then—you're not going abroad to study?

YOUNG PETER. [*Shaking his head.*] No.

PETER. You—mean—you're giving up your painting, —your career?

YOUNG PETER. Yes, Father.

PETER. Ah!

YOUNG PETER. I've reasoned it all out. I'd never make a painter, not a good one, don't you see? I'd just be daubing all my life, and it wouldn't come to anything. —I—I haven't got the flair for it,—the spark.

PETER. [*Groaning.*] Who has put this in your head?

YOUNG PETER. [*Stammering.*] Why—why no one, of course. I—I've thought it out myself. I'm no good at it, Father,—really. I—I'm just a dub. I'd always be a dub like—like— [*He breaks off lamely.*].

PETER. [*Nodding drearily to himself.*] Yes.—Yes, I see. [*A pause.*] What—what has happened to you?

YOUNG PETER. [*Unconvincingly.*] Why nothing. No.

PETER. Just a few weeks ago we talked of your ambitions and your hopes. You had been sketching on the cliff. Do you remember?

YOUNG PETER. Yes.

PETER. You had no thoughts of this kind then.

YOUNG PETER. Well—not just then perhaps. I've thought it all out since. It's such a chance, you know. You must admit that, Father. [*But PETER does not answer.*] And then it takes so long. One spends a life time getting a start—and at the end— [*His father's eyes are disconcerting. He goes on rather mumbling.*] It costs too much, that's all. You have to give up everything. Well—there are other things in life—

PETER. What other things?

YOUNG PETER. [*Awkwardly.*] Oh so many!—One can't say.—Well—there's money,—enough I mean to have the things you want.—And of course—a home, and—and wife—and children— [*He ends with a nervous laugh.*]

PETER. Who has put all this into your head?

YOUNG PETER. Why, I've told you, Father,—no one.

PETER. [*To himself.*] Yes. [*He ponders for a moment. Heavily.*] You're not telling me the truth, my boy.

YOUNG PETER. Father!

PETER. You may think you are, but you're not. Someone has prompted these ideas,—someone,—someone—

YOUNG PETER. [*Laughing mirthlessly.*] What a notion! Who would have a thought for what I do?

PETER. I don't know.

YOUNG PETER. You're utterly mistaken, Father. I've simply thought the whole thing out myself. One has to make a choice in life. One can't have everything. It's just a case of figuring out then what one wants.

PETER. [*Repeating mechanically.*] Yes—what one wants—

YOUNG PETER. [*Gaining confidence.*] If things go right with me,—well then some day I'll take up my painting again. Because of course it—it interests me more than anything else that I could do. Only, well, you see— [*He stops, suddenly conscious of the fact that his father is not listening, and over his shoulder he follows old PETER'S gaze to the figure of BUNNY framed in the arch. Her dress is soft and gray and clinging, and a little gray toque perches jauntily on her head. She looks smart and metropolitan, and there is a weary little smile on her lips as she saunters a step or two into the room.*]

BUNNY. [*With careless geniality.*] Hello, old Peter! [*He mumbles something, and stands there staring at her as if he doubted the evidence of his eyes. YOUNG PETER hurries to her side. She lowers her voice to him.*] He wasn't there.

YOUNG PETER. [*Under his breath.*] Thank God! I've been half wild because I let you go alone.

BUNNY. Have you? [*She smiles.*] I waited an interminable time. He didn't come and so I left a note. I pinned it to his pillow.

YOUNG PETER. What did you say?

BUNNY. I only said—goodbye.

YOUNG PETER. No explanations? Nothing?

BUNNY. What good are explanations? When a thing is done, it's done. [*She shrugs her shoulders.*]

PETER. [*Whose ears have caught half phrases.*] Of what are you talking there? [*And his voice is charged with undefined alarm.*]

YOUNG PETER. Why—why nothing. [*And he moves away from BUNNY's side.*]

MILDRED. [*Appearing on the landing. Incredulously.*] Why, Peter! Bunny!

PETER. If you are looking for Konrad, he isn't here. He came to dinner but he's gone. [*It is her turn to be confused.*] He was worried because you hadn't come this afternoon or telegraphed. It's too bad to cause him such concern. He's very fond of you. I never realized how much until tonight.

BUNNY. [*To YOUNG PETER.*] You haven't told him?

YOUNG PETER. [*Miserably.*] I—I was just going to.

BUNNY. [*Reproachfully.*] Ah Peter!—Peter!

PETER. [*With an effort to keep his voice steady.*] What do you mean?—What is there to be told? [*He looks from one to the other. YOUNG PETER shifts his eyes. His gaze returns to BUNNY then and stays there. In the pause MILDRED slowly descends the steps.*]

BUNNY. [*Simply.*] We're married,—Peter.

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Oh! [*He sways a bit, passes his trembling hands across his forehead, then suddenly in a hoarse and altered voice.*] No. No, that's not true. Why do you say a thing like that—a monstrous thing? What do you mean? What are you doing here? [*And BUNNY winces at his words, recoils a step or two, and stares at him dumbly. MILDRED has only gasped; stands at the foot of the steps her hand resting on the newel post. He turns to YOUNG PETER now.*] You say to me—that isn't true, what—she said.

YOUNG PETER. It is true, Father.

PETER. Ah!

YOUNG PETER. That's why I came home—to tell you. I— Well, you see, we love each other, Father.

PETER. Love!—Oh God!—God! [*And he sinks down in a chair and buries his face in his hands.*]

MILDRED. [*Coming into action.*] Oh, Bunny!—How could you?—How could you?

YOUNG PETER. [*Intercepting her advance.*] Mother!—Please—

MILDRED. [*Her voice is shrill.*] You're only a boy, Peter, and you've been made a fool of. [*She brushes him aside*

and goes up close to BUNNY.] You ought to be ashamed, Bunny. You really ought. [*BUNNY is tight lipped and silent, and otherwise impassive.*] A woman of your years to take an inexperienced boy like that—

YOUNG PETER. Mother!

MILDRED. And with your past—

BUNNY. [*This shaft has got its mark.*] Oh!—What do you mean?—What of my past?

MILDRED. [*Without confidence.*] Well,—one can imagine.

BUNNY. What?

YOUNG PETER. [*Trying to interpose himself between them.*] Please!—Please!

BUNNY. [*Brushing him aside.*] Wait a bit! [*Her voice rises dangerously.*] Come now, let's have this out. You're slinging mud at me.—Well, what about?

MILDRED. [*Losing ground.*] Surely you haven't the impudence to pretend that you're a—a virtuous woman.

BUNNY. I'm not a virgin if that's what you mean.

MILDRED. You know what I mean.

BUNNY. No, I'm damned if I do!

YOUNG PETER. Oh! What's the good of all this talk? [*But neither of them pay any attention to him.*]

MILDRED. Aren't you living here as the mistress of a married man?

BUNNY. Haven't you accepted me as his wife?

MILDRED. What's that to do with it?

BUNNY. [*With a note of triumph.*] Just everything, that's all. Well, what else have you got against my character?

MILDRED. [*Pretty well whipped.*] I don't know anything about your character—or what you've been—or—or done.

BUNNY. Oh! [*And she sighs with relief.*]

MILDRED. But it was wrong of you, Bunny, very, very wrong of you— [*Her ammunition is exhausted. She turns to YOUNG PETER. Whimpering.*] I suppose you know we've sold Spindrift, Peter. [*He bows his head wretchedly.*] Well, I can't understand how you can be so inconsiderate as to change your plans now. It upsets everything.—We sold the place so we could go abroad with you, don't you understand?—And now I suppose you don't intend to go at all. [*He nods. She wails bitterly.*] It isn't fair. It isn't fair at all.—And it was all on your account we sold it.

YOUNG PETER. I'm sorry, Mother. [*He starts toward her but she turns away.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She goes to PETER who is staring stonily into space, and she sobs.*] I don't know what's to be done, Peter. I'm sure I don't know. [*He looks at her vaguely.*] They've both been very inconsiderate and unkind.—When I think of all the sacrifices that we've made— [*She sobs heart-brokenly.*] And I don't con-

sider her a fit person, Peter. No matter what she says, I don't—I don't— [*He only stares at her.*] Do you hear what I'm saying, Peter?

PETER. Yes.

MILDRED. Well then why don't you do something or say something? You're the boy's father, aren't you? [*He gets up with an effort.*] At least we've the right to know something more about her.

PETER. [*In a dull, heavy voice.*] What good is that?

MILDRED. I should think you'd want to know—

PETER. [*Interrupting.*] What does it matter what she's been or what she is? All women are prostitutes at heart.

MILDRED. Peter! [*And she redoubles her weeping.*]

PETER. But that is not the way they kill. [*He turns to BUNNY.*] I would like to speak with you—alone, Bunny.

BUNNY. [*With a shrug.*] Why not?

YOUNG PETER. [*Excitedly.*] No. I don't see why—

BUNNY. [*Smiling at him wearily.*] It's only talk. [*And she makes a sign to him to go.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Well— [*He crosses to the foot of the stairs.*] Mother.

MILDRED. [*Sighing.*] Yes. Well— [*She goes slowly to the stairs and pauses for a moment there.*] That was a terrible thing you said, Peter, about—about all women. I'm sure if you think it over you'll find it isn't true.

There is at least one woman who's never had a—a thought of that kind in her life.

YOUNG PETER. [*Waiting on the landing.*] Mother.

MILDRED. Yes. Well—people must take some responsibility for what they say! [*She crosses the threshold and he follows.*]

BUNNY. [*After a little pause.*] Well?

PETER. [*Slowly and deliberately.*] We have been friends, Bunny.

BUNNY. Yes. [*She sways faintly.*] Do you mind if I sit down? [*She laughs and sinks down on a chair.*] It has been a rather strenuous day. [*PETER stands awkwardly near by.*] I'm sorry I interrupted you. Go on.

PETER. Yes.—I only meant to say: that boy,—his future, that— Well, that's my life, Bunny. That's—all—I have to live for.

BUNNY. Yes, I understand. [*A pause.*] Well?

PETER. It's deeper than you think or could imagine. You see— [*He hesitates.*] I've never said a thing like this to anyone before, but—well you see— [*Again he hesitates.*] my—my life has missed fire, Bunny.—It—it hasn't come to anything. I wanted to do something big and fine, and I haven't.

BUNNY. [*After a pause.*] And you want Young Peter to redeem you.

PETER. Yes. I suppose that's what I mean. I want him to succeed where I have failed.

BUNNY. But suppose he can't?

PETER. Can't?—What do you mean?

BUNNY. Suppose it isn't *in* him?

PETER. But it is. It must be, don't you see? He has fine talent; everyone knows that. Now if it's carefully trained—

BUNNY. A Doremy would do better to play a safer game.

PETER. But you don't understand—

BUNNY. [*Wearily.*] I do. I do completely.

PETER. You can't want to ruin him. You can't—you can't. [*She tightens her lips.*] A month ago his heart and soul were in his work. You've just bewitched him. But that can't last. Think what will happen then: He'll hate you, Bunny,—hate you for what you've stolen from him.

BUNNY. [*Starting to her feet.*] Stolen? What have I stolen?

PETER. His youth and his future.

BUNNY. No. No. [*And there is lightning flashing from her eyes.*] That isn't true. What do you offer him in place of me? A chance to break his heart as you broke yours. That's all I've stolen from him.

PETER. Listen to me, please.

BUNNY. No. Why should I? What can you know of what is best for him? You who've made such a mess out

of yourself. The Doremys! [*She laughs shrilly.*] And Konrad too and all the others like you,—beating your heads against stone walls and eating out your hearts because you can't be something that you're not. [*He stares at her dumbly.*] I'll tell you what: There's something bigger than painting or cutting things in stone,—something you don't know anything about. And that's the art of living, Peter,—that's what I mean.—Mariana in the kitchen with her pots and her pans and her little plaster God,—she's got it on you all. She knows. [*The torrent ends as abruptly as it began. A moment's pause. She turns toward the door.*]

PETER. [*Hoarsely.*] Wait!

BUNNY. No. [*She tries to pass. He takes hold of her wrists.*] Peter! [*He lets her loose and she backs away from him.*]

PETER. I only want to ask you something. [*His voice is close to breaking.*] Why did you do this thing? Why did you take my boy?

BUNNY. Why? The reason is so natural and so simple that you won't believe it.

PETER. Why? I ask you why?

BUNNY. Because I love him!

PETER. [*Bitterly.*] Love!—Is that worth what it's going to cost?

BUNNY. I don't know, Peter. I've had no experience of love before. [*A pause.*] I think it is. I hope it is. [*She turns again toward the door.*]

PETER. Bunny! [*She stops.*] You've always been a good sport, Bunny. [*A pause.*] Give the boy a chance.

BUNNY. What do you mean?

PETER. [*Pleading desperately.*] If you'll just go away and let things rest a while,—give him a chance to—to see things as they are.—I don't mean anything but that,—just that. If you'll only go. Six months, that's all I ask. [*She returns his gaze steadily as if meditating.*] If—if he should change his mind, the thing could be arranged. Perhaps no one would ever know. [*A pause.*] Bunny.

BUNNY. [*Angrily.*] No. Why should I gamble with the only thing I've ever had?

PETER. It isn't much to ask.

BUNNY. Isn't it though? [*She shrugs her shoulders, turns again toward the door. He stands aside with bowed head to let her pass. And now at the moment that her hand reaches out to grasp the knob.*]

KONRAD. [*Framed in the arch. Actually hissing.*] So! [*She gasps, leans weakly against the framing of the door. She is not terrified, but sick of it and tired. And KONRAD poses there, hatless, breathless, leaning with both hands on the black thorn stick, and scowling incredibly,—all quite in the manner of an avenging angel. And he repeats with fine effect.*] So!

BUNNY. [*Tremulously from sheer fatigue.*] How did you know I had come here?

ACT II]

SPINDRIFT

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KONRAD. [*In a voice to match the scowl.*] I didn't know, but—I thought I just have a look.

BUNNY. [*Absently.*] Yes. [*She glances toward the landing apprehensively.*]

KONRAD. So! [*He stamps up to her, unfolds her note, and shakes it in her face.*] What is the explanation of this—please?

BUNNY. [*Whimsically.*] Don't tell me you haven't read it?

KONRAD. [*Confused.*] Certainly I have read it. Why else would I be here?

BUNNY. Then you don't need an explanation.

KONRAD. We will speak of that later. Now you will come home.

BUNNY. Don't be absurd, Konrad.

KONRAD. Absurd? Humph! [*He turns suddenly to PETER.*] I suppose you have known about this, eh? An accomplice as it were. That is a way to treat a friend!

PETER. [*He stares at KONRAD dully as if he had not heard, and then goes slowly toward the terrace, pauses at the entrance, faces BUNNY, and stammers awkwardly.*] What you said about people—beating their heads—against stone walls. Well, I—I have been thinking about that. It— There is something in that—yes. [*He hesitates struggling with his thoughts.*] But you—

You think you are different from that. No. [*He shakes his head.*] For, don't you see? You yourself are trying to be something that you are not. And you are trying to do something that—that will not work.

BUNNY. [*In shrill denial.*] No.

PETER. [*Earnestly.*] Yes, Bunny. Yes.

KONRAD. [*Savagely.*] What is the meaning of this talk? [*PETER looks at him absently, turns away, and walks slowly from the room. He turns to BUNNY. Roughly.*] Let us have done with all this foolishness. Why you have written such a thing as this I don't know and I don't ask. Some temperamental whim, I suppose. Well—I tear it up and forget it. [*He suits his action to the words, then strides across the room and flings the pieces in the fire.*] There! That is finished now. Come, let us go home.

BUNNY. [*Backing away from him.*] No.

KONRAD. [*Raising his voice angrily.*] Ach! Enough is enough. You want to make a scene here. Come now, I tell you, we go home.

BUNNY. [*Hysteria creeping into her voice.*] Don't yell at me like that!—I'm done with you, you understand? I've quit! I'm through!

KONRAD. [*A little frightened now.*] Ah! Ah! Such things to say to me!

BUNNY. I told you long ago it would wear out some day, and that I'd quit.

KONRAD. What have I done that you should treat me so?

BUNNY. Nothing.—Everything comes to an end some time.

KONRAD. [*He stands there pondering miserably some new point of appeal. Then with a great air of heartiness.*] Come, come, why should we quarrel? Let us forget it now as if it were a bad dream that is past. We'll take a trip somewhere and get it all out of our minds. To South America perhaps. What do you say?

BUNNY. [*Shaking her head.*] No.

KONRAD. Ah, Bunny, don't say that!

BUNNY. We've taken our last trip together, Konrad.

KONRAD. [*Passionately.*] I won't believe that from your lips.—You couldn't— No, you won't— You owe me something, Bunny, something.

BUNNY. I owe you just exactly nothing.

KONRAD. Ah, Bunny, think of the years that we have spent together!

BUNNY. [*With a gesture of revulsion.*] Yes, I do.

KONRAD. [*With a catch in his voice.*] I have been so happy and so grateful for the blessing of you.

BUNNY. For God's sake don't be sentimental! [*She laughs hysterically.*]

KONRAD. No, no, I'm not. I won't. But look, Bunny, look! See what condition I am in! I am no longer young. It can only be a little while and then you will be free,

and you will have some means,—enough to make things pleasant all your life.

BUNNY. No. No. No. [*Each one like the crack of a pistol.*]

KONRAD. Ah, God, have pity on me! Don't leave me now to spend my old age alone. You won't be so cruel as that. I love you, Bunny, ah, so much! [*He holds out his hands as if in supplication.*]

BUNNY. [*Frantically.*] If I knew that you would die tomorrow I wouldn't wait that long, do you hear?

KONRAD. [*Despairingly.*] Ah, God! [*And he buries his face in his hands. In a few moments he raises his head and looks at her with such a malevolent expression that she recoils. He takes several steps toward her, and when he speaks his voice is hoarse with fury.*] So! It is plain enough. I am fitted with a pair of horns and kicked out. You have a lover.

BUNNY. [*Catching her breath.*] No.

KONRAD. Do you take me for a fool? You go to the city to shop, eh? Well, that is amusing.

BUNNY. [*Passionately.*] I swear to you before God—

KONRAD. Save all that for him.

BUNNY. Oh! [*She sways and catches a chair back for support.*] You've never had a decent thought of any woman in your life,—not even your own mother, I believe.

KONRAD. [*Planting himself in front of her.*] Who is this man?

BUNNY. [*Looking him steadily in the eye.*] I have no lover.

KONRAD. [*Contemptuously.*] Bah! You lie! [YOUNG PETER *appears on the landing.*] Ach! [*He starts back, and stares.*] So it's you? By God! I might have known. [*He turns to BUNNY choking with rage.*] You like them young, eh? [*He turns back to YOUNG PETER.*] And you, you whippersnapper, you make a cuckold of me, eh? [*He strides toward him. YOUNG PETER squares his shoulders and stands his ground. MILDRED is behind him in the door.*] By God! I teach you now a lesson that you don't forget. [*He raises his stick.*]

BUNNY. [*In shrill warning.*] Take care! [*The stick descends and MILDRED screams. YOUNG PETER catches the blow deftly, twists the stick from its owner's hands and drops it to the floor.*]

MILDRED. [*Rushing at KONRAD like a fury.*] How dare you lift your hand against my boy? You should be ashamed,—ashamed!—Do you think he's to blame for this?

KONRAD. [*Nursing his wrist.*] He comes into my house and steals my—my wife.

MILDRED. [*Bitterly.*] Your wife! If she had been your wife it never would have happened. It's all your fault.

KONRAD. [*Confused.*] My fault?

MILDRED. [*Bursting into tears.*] Yes, yes. For bringing such a woman here. And now we've sold the house and all our plans are ruined. Do you think we like what's happened?

KONRAD. I—I—

MILDRED. You should be glad to be rid of her. We are the ones that suffer. Spindrift sold and everything turned upside down. Do you know what that means? A thing like that?

KONRAD. I don't know what you're talking about.

MILDRED. [*Wailing.*] I daresay, I daresay. You're just like that: so selfish. You never think of anyone except yourself. [*She sits down on the edge of a chair and sobs into her handkerchief.*]

KONRAD. [*Shrugging without conviction.*] Bah!

MILDRED. You wouldn't like it either if your son went off one day and came back with—with a wife like that.

KONRAD. [*His jaw drops.*] Wife?

MILDRED. Of course [*sob*] otherwise [*sob*] there might be [*sob*] some way out. [*sob, sob, sob*] But now [*sob*] it's hopeless. [*sob*] Nothing [*sob*] can ever be [*sob*] the same again. [*sob, sob*]

KONRAD. [*Gazing at BUNNY in pathetic stupefaction.*] You—you are married with this boy? [*She nods slowly.*] Ach, God! [*He stands there, hand clasped upon his injured wrist. And suddenly in this moment he is old and feeble. YOUNG PETER picks his cane up from the floor.*]

YOUNG PETER. I'm sorry if I hurt your wrist. [*He holds the stick out doubtfully.*]

KONRAD. [*Vacantly.*] My wrist? [*He looks at it and at the boy.*] No— [*He laughs shortly and bitterly, and takes his stick.*] Thank you. [*He turns away and plods heavily toward the door.*]

[*The curtain falls.*]

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

Same as Act I.

Darkness just yielding to the break of day. Presently bit by bit the scene will be revealed in the gray and cheerless light of dawn. The chimney is gone. Some stones from it have crashed through the cypress trees and rolled into the foreground. The ship's lantern has been shaken from its bracket and lies in the center of the table in a mess of shattered glass. Some tiles are missing from the roof. No other damage is apparent. Even the umbrella on the terrace is uninjured, suggesting that light and unimportant objects are after all the safest. At the right against the wall are shapeless looking mounds which turn out to be sleepers under gray blankets. There are sleepers too on the bench behind the table but completely hidden by it.

At one end of this bench a figure suddenly sits up, rubbing its eyes and shivering with the cold, it stands up and with difficulty unwinds a blanket in which it is swathed. It is PETER DOREMY.

He creeps painfully away from the wall, careful not to disturb the other sleepers. His joints are stiff from the stone bed and one leg declines to function. He rubs it, and tests it carefully, and groans. And he hobbles to the grill, and finds some kindling, and kindles a little fire. His baggy evening clothes are one great wrinkle trimmed with plaster dust. His collar and tie are gone, and his shirt front limp and dirty.

At the far end of the bench another figure pops up and goes through much the same performance. It is MILDRED, wan and bedraggled. She becomes aware of the wreckage of the lantern and the scattered stones, and she peers fearfully over her shoulder at the spot where the chimney once stood, and moans and shudders. And she crawls toward the grill, lame and cold and miserable, and stands there watching PETER as he rubs his numb hands to the blaze.

MILDRED. [*Softly.*] Peter!

PETER. [*Startled.*] Eh?

MILDRED. Hush! [*She puts her finger to her lips and points to the gray mounds.*]

PETER. Yes. [*A pause.*] I suppose I woke you.—I—I'm sorry.

MILDRED. [*With a deep sigh.*] I haven't closed my eyes.

PETER. Nor I. [*She holds her hands to the fire. There is a pause.*]

MILDRED. Peter!

PETER. Yes?

MILDRED. The—the chimney, Peter— [*There is a catch in her voice.*] It—it's all gone, every bit of it.

PETER. Yes—I know. [*And he stares with intense vagueness at the wreckage.*]

MILDRED. Peter!

PETER. Yes?

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ACT I—III
Designed by Wm. Kline

MILDRED. [*Faltering.*] All night long I've been thinking, if—if I hadn't built that chimney— [*She hesitates.*]

PETER. Yes?

MILDRED. Well—then the earthquake couldn't have knocked it down.

PETER. [*Doubtfully.*] No.

MILDRED. And—and poor Mariana— [*She covers her face with her hands.*]

PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Ah, yes!—Mariana.—Poor Mariana — [*He goes over and sits down on the end of the wooden bench with an elbow on the table and his chin in his hand.*]

MILDRED. [*Following him.*] Peter!

PETER. Yes?

MILDRED [*Pathetically.*] What—what are we to do, Peter?

PETER. Oh! [*He ponders.*] Why nothing.—Nothing.—They'll come from town bye and bye and—and get her.

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*Pause.*] I didn't mean about Mariana, Peter. [*She sits on the bench beside him.*]

PETER. Oh! [*And he looks at her inquiringly.*]

MILDRED. I—I mean about everything.

PETER. Oh! [*He ponders. It is a big order.*]

MILDRED. Our boy, Peter.

PETER. Yes.

MILDRED. And our home gone.

PETER. Yes.

MILDRED. And I don't know why we should go to Paris now or—or anywhere.

PETER. No.

MILDRED. [*Shuddering.*] It's just as if the earthquake had turned our lives all upside down.

PETER. Yes. I—I've thought of that.

MILDRED. [*After a pause. Timidly.*] Peter! [*He raises his head and looks at her.*] I think I understand now, I—I haven't been a help to you, Peter. I've only been a burden and a drag.

PETER. [*Miserably.*] No.

MILDRED. But I have. At least I could have saved your money and not have thrown it away on things like this. [*She stands up wringing her hands.*] Ah, if there was only something I could do! I'd take these stones down one by one with my bare hands if I could give back to you—

PETER. [*Rising and taking her arm. Hoarse with emotion.*] Hush! You mustn't say such things.—It is I who am to blame for—everything. A man who spends his life hunting will-o'-the-wisps and marsh lights. A mole who wants to fly. [*He laughs harshly.*]

MILDRED. No, Peter.

PETER. Yes, it's plain enough. And it took an earthquake to make me see it. The Doremys are like that.—

Well, I'm through with painting. I shall never touch another brush.

MILDRED. [*Incredulously.*] Peter!

PETER. My paint would turn to water. [*And he sits down again and buries his face in his hands.*]

MILDRED. But what will you do? [*She sits down beside him.*]

PETER. I don't know.

MILDRED. [*Reflecting.*] I suppose you could go into some business with the money from the house.

PETER. [*Startled.*] Business?— [*He considers the idea with mild interest.*] Yes. [*Curiously.*] What sort of business?

MILDRED. Well I don't know. I was thinking: real estate—insurance—something like that—

PETER. Oh! [*He reflects not uncheerfully.*]

MILDRED. It can't be very difficult. You've only to look at the sort of people who *do* make money.

PETER. Hum—

MILDRED. And you might be much happier doing something like that.

PETER. We'd take an apartment in the city and I'd have my office down town.

MILDRED. Yes.

PETER. If it wasn't too far I could walk night and morning. I'd get my exercise that way.

MILDRED. I think it might be very nice.

PETER. [*With desperate earnestness.*] Yes. It may be the very thing I need. At fifty a man can still remake his life— [*Wistfully.*] Don't—don't you think so, Mildred?

MILDRED. [*Doubtfully.*] Well, I don't know. I hadn't thought of it that way.

PETER. [*Listlessly.*] No.— I—Well, we must look into it.

MILDRED. [*After a pause.*] Peter! [*He looks at her.*] Anyway—no matter what happens—I hope you still care for me a little, Peter. It doesn't seem that either of us has much else left now. [*He puts his arm around her shoulders and she drops her head on his breast with a little quavering sigh of relief.*] And you didn't mean what you said last night about—all women being those—unmentionable things.

PETER. No.

MILDRED. [*Sighing.*] I'm glad of that, dear. [*He gets up and takes a few uncertain steps.*] You might bring some things from the house, Peter, for breakfast. I suppose we've still to eat.

PETER. Yes. [*And he plods away.*]

MILDRED. [*Calling softly after him.*] Some bacon and eggs and coffee and a loaf of bread.

[*One of the gray mounds comes suddenly to life and BUNNY rolls out of it to a sitting posture on the ground. She has come through a bad night fairly well, but it's*

no good pretending that she shows no signs of it. She smiles and waves her hand to MILDRED, and, indicating with a gesture another mound close by, touches her finger to her lips and shakes her head. She pulls on a pair of high heeled low shoes, stands up noiselessly, shakes out her skirt, and tiptoes to the table.]

BUNNY. [*Amiably.*] He's still asleep.

MILDRED. Yes. [*Her manner is awkward and uncertain.*]

BUNNY. He really isn't hurt, you know. It's only a scratch.

MILDRED. Yes, I know. [*She shudders and looks back at the house.*] But it's only a miracle he wasn't caught under the stones with Mariana.

BUNNY. He's a good little sport. He didn't wait to think it over. He went right after her. [*She sits down at the end of the table. A pause.*] It's funny, isn't it?

MILDRED. [*Sharply.*] What?

BUNNY. I mean that out of all of us it should have been —Mariana.

MILDRED. Oh! [*She considers. Resentfully.*] I don't see what's funny about it.

BUNNY. No? [*She smiles to herself.*] No, you wouldn't, Mildred. [*She shrugs her shoulders. And she takes from her wrist bag, rouge, powder, lip stick, and a comb, and begins to make her toilet.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She sighs.*] So many funny things have happened I don't know what to think of

anything. Everything is changed and upside down. Nothing will ever be the same again—I don't know—
[*She shakes her head dismally.*]

BUNNY. [*Busy with her toilet. Carelessly.*] Nonsense! Nothing has really changed, Mildred, except perhaps—
[*She hesitates and glances toward the house.*]—the chimney.

MILDRED. [*Tartly.*] I don't know what you mean I'm sure.—The chimney's in the kitchen—most of it. [*A shrouded figure recumbent in the swing becomes suddenly animated and emits sounds.*] Oh dear! [*She flies to the swing, falls to her knees. Tenderly.*] There, there, my poor child! [*ELLEN'S white face emerges from the blanket.*] I was in hopes you'd sleep. I'll have a cup of coffee for you soon. [*ELLEN protests faintly.*] But we all have to eat, my dear, no matter what happens. Things must go on.

ELLEN. [*Sitting up in the corner of the swing. In a weak, dull voice.*] I don't see how things can go on—for me.

MILDRED. Oh, yes, they will! I'm sure of it, Ellen.

ELLEN. No. No. [*She shakes her head.*] Don't you see, Mildred, everything is changed, and nothing can ever be the same again.

MILDRED. [*Struck by the deadly parallel.*] Well I—I was just saying something like that myself, but— [*Firmly.*] We mustn't give way to morbid thoughts. I expect everything is for the best—some way. [*And she sighs.*]

ELLEN. [*Gloomily.*] No. [*And she leans back and closes her eyes.* PETER returns with a tray piled high with food and dishes. He puts it down on the table and raises his head to look into BUNNY'S eyes. MILDRED goes to the table and examines the contents of the tray.]

BUNNY. [*Amiably, after a long moment.*] Good morning, Peter.

PETER. [*Another long moment passes.*] Good morning.

BUNNY. Are we going to be friends or foes?

PETER. I don't know, Bunny—I haven't thought things out. [*He turns away, plods across to the steps, mounts slowly to the terrace, and looks out towards the sea. And now the sun has climbed high enough to flood the garden. It is going to be, indeed already is, a glorious morning.*]

MILDRED. [*In an irritated and disgusted tone.*] Cooking!—Eating!—I really don't know what's the good of it myself.—I don't know what's the good of anything—now. [*And she pushes things about so that they rattle.*] I vowed I'd never cook again, and now Mariana's gone.

PETER. [*Exclaiming wildly.*] Oh, my God!

MILDRED and BUNNY. [*In startled unison.*] What? [*He comes tearing down the steps.*]

PETER. [*In a state of mad excitement.*] The sea!—The sea!—Magnificent!—Incredible! [BUNNY runs up the steps.]

MILDRED. What do you mean?

PETER. The quake has done something to the sea.—Breakers mountain high! And spindrift pouring off the crests in cataracts!

MILDRED. Oh!

PETER. I must get at it quick. [*And he tears away to the house as fast as he can go.*]

MILDRED. [*To BUNNY who is already descending the steps.*] Is it anything?

BUNNY. [*Shrugging.*] The surf is rather high. [*She sits down and puts the finishing touches to her face.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She moves things about from the tray to the table to the grill.*]

BUNNY. Can I do anything to help. Mildred?

MILDRED. [*Grudgingly.*] No, I guess not.

BUNNY. I'm not much good at cooking.

MILDERD. Pretty women seldom are.

BUNNY. [*Smiling.*] Do you think I'm very pretty, Mildred?

MILDRED. Well— [*She considers.*] I think you might cook—a little.

BUNNY. [*Laughing delightedly and stowing her tools away.*] Come now, I can do something.—What?

MILDRED. Well—there's the coffee.

BUNNY. Of course—I can do that. [*And she trips over to the grill. PETER comes tearing back, brushes and palette in one hand, and a canvas stretched and ready in the other. He dashes up the steps without a glance to right or left, and plunges at his task.*]

MILDRED. [*Querulously.*] Peter! [*No answer. She goes to the foot of the steps and raises her voice.*] Peter! You've forgotten the cream and the sugar and the butter—Peter!

PETER. [*Quite unconscious.*] Um—um— [*He steps back in characteristic pose squinting at the sea.*]

MILDRED. Yes. Well— [*She sighs.*] I suppose it's no use talking to you now. [*And she trudges away to the house. A few moments pass. BUNNY is busy at the grill. And now the last of the gray mounds is mightily stirred and YOUNG PETER, with a blood stained rag bound round his head, sits up yawning and rubbing his eyes. At the sound of him BUNNY drops everything and flies to his side.*]

BUNNY. Peter!—Sweetheart! [*ELLEN opens her eyes and regards them sourly.*] What a sight you are!—But I love you just the same, Peter— [*With a catch in her voice.*] Oh, God, how much I love you!—And what a fool I am! [*He responds to her caresses clumsily, inexpertly, a little embarrassed at all this sort of thing in broad daylight.*] It's funny, isn't it?—All my life I've wanted a honeymoon—a real one with the man I loved. And then on the very night the earth must go and turn itself inside out. That's funny, don't you think so? [*He laughs awkwardly. The subject is a little broad.*]

Peter!—Do you love me, Peter? [*He smiles into her eyes.*] Yes, but are you sure?—Sure? [*He puts his arm around her waist, draws her to him, and presses a kiss upon her lips. At length she draws away quite thrilled and breathless.*] Thank you, dear.—You—you are improving. [ELLEN *clears her throat, a disapproving sound.*] I'm sorry, Ellen. I'd forgotten you were there.

ELLEN. [*Listlessly.*] It doesn't matter.

BUNNY. You see we *are* in love and on our honeymoon—in spite of everything. We can't change that nor quite forget it.

ELLEN. It must be very hard on Mildred and on Peter.

BUNNY. [*Lightly.*] Love is always hard on someone, Ellen. One is only lucky if it's someone else.

ELLEN. I don't know. I gave my life to my father. [*In great haste.*] I don't regret it.—It has been a great joy to me. [*She closes her eyes again.*]

BUNNY. [*Drily.*] Yes—no doubt.

YOUNG PETER. [*Pondering moodily.*] It *will* be hard on them. Everything will be different for them now.

BUNNY. Different?

YOUNG PETER. Well, of course, Bunny dear, you must see that. The whole plan of their lives will be altered now and changed.

BUNNY. I hope so.

YOUNG PETER. [*Blankly.*] You hope so?

BUNNY. Yes. But— [*She glances over her shoulder at old PETER on the terrace and shrugs her shoulders.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Following her eyes, incredulously.*] Why, he's painting! [*And he leans against the end of the table staring at his father. She watches him for a few moments with a speculative look in her eyes.*]

BUNNY. Are you going to regret that, Peter?

YOUNG PETER. [*Startled.*] Painting?—Oh, no! [*Vaguely.*] Well of course I'm fond of it.—One always likes a thing that—that one seems to do well.

BUNNY. [*With the suspicion of a sigh.*] Yes.

YOUNG PETER. Some day when—when I can I'll take it up again, perhaps.

BUNNY. Yes, but now what will you do?

YOUNG PETER. I don't know.

BUNNY. I have some jewelry but it won't last long.

YOUNG PETER. [*Hastily.*] Oh, no! We won't need to use that. I'll find something in the city right away—with—with some art dealer perhaps. [*She catches her breath and her jaw seems to tighten.*] Father knows all of them. He'll help me to get a place.

BUNNY. Yes?

YOUNG PETER. [*After a pause. Half to himself.*] I wonder what he's doing. [*He starts up the steps. She watches him with furrows in her brow. And now KONRAD tramps into view. He is again in wool shirt, khaki*

breeches, and puttees, and he carries in one hand his stick, and in the other a small coffee pot. His head is heavy and his shoulders sag. There is no spring in his legs nor life in his voice. His hair is uncombed and his beard has lost its point.]

KONRAD. [*Bowing awkwardly.*] Excuse me. [BUNNY turns with a start. He stammers.] I—er—the electric power is not working this morning. I—er—thought I could perhaps cook my coffee on your fire here.

BUNNY. [*Pleasantly.*] Why, of course, Konrad.

KONRAD. [*Stiffly.*] Thank you so much. [*He crosses toward the grill and his glance falls on PETER squinting at his canvas and YOUNG PETER, at his father's side, squinting with equal earnestness.*] So! [*He laughs harshly, contemptuously, and turns back to BUNNY jerking his head toward the figures on the terrace.*] Whip-persnapper!—You are clever but you are a fool. You cannot stand a life with him. He will drive you crazy in a week.—By God! [*His voice breaks.*] I give my soul to have you back. [*She smiles into his eyes.*] Bunny! [*She shakes her head. He sighs heavily and turns away.*—MILDRED returns with a tray. As she comes into view there is a great sizzling and sputtering in the grill.]

MILDRED. [*In shrill warning.*] The coffee! The coffee! [*She breaks into a run.*] It's boiling over. [*Reproachfully.*] Oh, Bunny!—Bunny!

BUNNY. I'm so sorry.

MILDRED. [*With the coffee pot in her hand.*] Yes. Well — [*She sighs. Irritably.*] What do you want, Konrad?

KONRAD. [*Stiffly.*] I have my own coffee. I simply wish to boil it. [*He slams the pot down on the grill and stamps away.*]

MILDRED. [*To BUNNY.*] You might cut some bread for toast.

BUNNY. Oh, yes, of course! [*And she goes to the table and sets to work. MILDRED is busy at the grill.*]

KONRAD. Ah! [*He has noticed ELLEN in the swing. Her eyes are closed. He looks at her with vague interest. Softly.*] Ellen! [*She opens her eyes.*] I have already a telegram from your brother. He comes on the first train. [*He takes the yellow slip from his pocket and holds it out. She barely glances at it.*]

ELLEN. [*Listlessly.*] He has a wife and children. I haven't seen him for five years.

KONRAD. Hum— [*He sits down in the swing beside her.*] Now you go and live with him, eh?

ELLEN. [*Excitedly.*] No, no, I couldn't—I couldn't stand it— Living other people's lives!—No, I would rather die. [*She sinks back again into her corner.*]

KONRAD. What will you do then?

ELLEN. I don't know.

KONRAD. So! [*He ponders. Bluffly.*] Everyone has troubles, Ellen. Nobody escapes. But when one is young one has always something to look forward to. If it's only a mirage that is anyway something. You must look ahead now, not behind. Make for yourself some pretty pictures and some dreams.

ELLEN. [*Drearily.*] There is nothing. I had only my father, Konrad, and—I have lost him.

KONRAD. Ach! Ach! I have loved and lost so many times. All my life I have been loving, yes, and losing. And yet—there is always something still to come. Each time is the last, each day the end, and yet—there is always somehow—a tomorrow. [*A little pause. Tensely, half to himself.*] There always has been. [*She shakes her head with a wan smile and closes her eyes again.*]

BOOTS. [*Bursting into view.*] Peter!—Mildred!—Oh, there you are! [*She tears across to the grill.*] Mildred! Tell me: everything's all right, isn't it?

MILDRED. [*Blankly.*] All right? Well— [*She looks about helplessly.*]

BOOTS. Don't tell me there's any damage, Mildred—anything serious I mean.

MILDRED. [*Gloomily.*] Well I don't know— I don't suppose anything will ever be the same again— I don't know what we're going to do.

BOOTS. [*Groaning.*] Oh!—Well, let's have the worst of it— What's happened? What?

BUNNY. Mariana is dead. The chimney fell on her.

BOOTS. Oh, what a pity! [*A pause. She reflects.*] And of course the chimney's ruined.

BUNNY. [*Pointing.*] Look! It's gone.

MILDRED. [*Sadly.*] It's in the kitchen—most of it.

BOOTS. Oh, God! Well, what else? What else?

MILDRED. You mean about the house?

BOOTS. [*Dancing with impatience.*] Of course. Of course.

MILDRED. Oh, I see! [*She reflects.*] Well really, Boots, there's nothing else. A little plaster fell—that's all.

BOOTS. You mean to say that everything's all right except that chimney?

MILDRED. Well, of course some little things fell down—vases and bric-a-brac and china—

BOOTS. Bother all that. I mean about the house.

BUNNY. Well, there's the house. Why don't you look at it? [*And as if suddenly inspired, the three of them turn and stare earnestly at the house.*]

BOOTS. [*After a pause.*] It looks all right.

BUNNY. It is all right.

MILDRED [*Doubtfully.*] Well, I don't know— Anyway I don't see that it makes much difference now.

BOOTS. [*Snapping.*] You don't?

MILDRED. [*Winning.*] I wish you wouldn't speak so sharply— No, I don't.

BOOTS. If the house fell down you couldn't expect Mr. Payne to buy it, could you?

MILDRED. Dear me! I never thought of that.

BOOTS. I've thought of nothing else all night. [*Calculating.*] I suppose a thousand dollars would put everything in order, eh?

MILDRED. Well, I don't know—I suppose so.

BOOTS. We may have to knock a thousand off the price. Of course we won't unless we have to.—What a pity the damn thing didn't wait a week! [*She sighs and perches cutely on the edge of the table swinging her pretty little legs. And KONRAD looks at her, and then leans forward with his elbows on his knees and looks again. It is doubtful if he ever really saw the girl before. MILDRED goes back to the grill. BUNNY is clipping the crusts from the bread.*] My God, I thought of everything last night. I thought now Spindrift's fallen down, there probably isn't one stone on another, and the sale's all off, and I shan't make a copper of commission, and I'm stuck in this hole for the balance of my life— Oh, God, what a nightmare!

KONRAD. [*To himself.*] Hum—hum— [*And he takes a small comb and a mirror from his pocket and begins to arrange his hair and beard with painstaking care. And now MR. PAYNE appears noiselessly inside the gate. He is dressed in the correct costume for a middle aged business man, but it has so little character that it defies description. He pauses just within the entrance and calls attention to his presence with a mild little cough.*]

MR. PAYNE. Er—good morning.

BOOTS. [*Jumping up. Almost boisterously.*] Oh, good morning!—Good morning, Mr. Payne!—Good morning!

MILDRED. [*Dismally.*] Good morning. [BUNNY goes to the grill and begins to make the toast.]

BOOTS. Gorgeous morning, isn't it?

MR. PAYNE. Er—yes. Very nice. [*He advances a few steps and becomes aware of the wreckage.*] Dear me!—Dear me!

BOOTS. [*With great cheerfulness.*] Oh, that's nothing, Mr. Payne—nothing at all—just the—the chimney!

MR. PAYNE. [*Emphatically.*] Dear me! [*And he gazes at the house.*]

BOOTS. It was new you see, er—green cement. It must have been green, don't you think so, Mildred?

MILDRED. [*Vaguely.*] Well, I don't know—Mr. Watts—

BOOTS. Well, it was of course. You simply can't count on green cement. [*She gazes at the house cocking her head critically.*] As a matter of fact I really think the house is better looking without it. [*And the three of them stare at the house with the utmost seriousness.*]

MILDRED. I shouldn't have cared about the chimney except for poor Mariana.

BOOTS. [*In a frantic whisper.*] Oh, for God's sake, Mildred! Do you want to ruin everything?

MILDRED. [*Blankly.*] What?

BOOTS. Have a heart! Have a heart! [*She turns radiantly to MR. PAYNE.*] Not a bit of damage. It's

amazing really. But then of course Spindrift was built to stand the wear of centuries.

MR. PAYNE. Hum—

BOOTS. Not even a crack in the walls.

MILDRED. Some plaster fell.

BOOTS. Well naturally, [*She laughs as if it were a huge joke.*] a little plaster. That might happen any time, eh, Mr. Payne?

MR. PAYNE. [*Very doubtfully.*] Oh, yes!

BOOTS. I daresay you got quite a kick out of our little quake.

MR. PAYNE. Hum—

BOOTS. Of course it really wasn't anything. I slept right through it all myself.

[*MILDRED looks at her and gasps.*]

MR. PAYNE. We—er—that is, Mrs. Payne and I had just retired. The—er—bed fell down. It—er—was most disconcerting.

BOOTS. What a shame! But those beds at the hotel! Really terrible! They fall down if you look at them.

MR. PAYNE. We spent the balance of the night—er—sitting on the lawn.

MILDRED. Dear me!

MR. PAYNE. Yes—er—it was rather damp and—er—depressing.

MILDRED. And how is dear Mrs. Payne?

MR. PAYNE. Not well—not well at all. Her—er—nervous system—er—completely upset.

BOOTS. [*Cheerfully.*] Too bad! But the first one always knocks one out a bit. Now the next one, you'd be surprised—she'll actually enjoy it.

MR. PAYNE. Hum—

MILDRED. Is she confined to her bed?

MR. PAYNE. Oh, dear, no!—Packing—er—packing.

BOOTS. [*With a ghastly suspicion in her voice.*] Packing?

MR. PAYNE. Yes. You see—er—we're leaving by the morning train.

BOOTS. [*Faintly.*] Oh! [*And she leans against the table with her hands tight on the edge of it. BUNNY leaves the toast to burn, and comes back a few steps. KONRAD, his toilet completed now, stands up to look on with absorbed attention. Even ELLEN opens her eyes.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Addressing himself to MILDRED.*] I wonder if I—er—might speak with Mr. Doremy?

MILDRED. Oh, yes, certainly, Mr. Payne! [*She goes to the steps and calls.*] Peter! [*No answer.*] Peter!

PETER. [*Absently.*] Be finished presently. Got to get this— [*His voice trails away.*]

MILDRED. But Mr. Payne is here, Peter, and he wants to see you.

PETER. [*Muttering furiously.*] My God! [*He puts down his palette and brushes and comes down the steps. YOUNG PETER follows him and remains standing at the bottom.*] Oh, yes! Good morning, Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE. [*Unable to suppress an exclamation at his appearance.*] Dear me!—I'm sorry to disturb you, but—er—you see Mrs. Payne is very much upset—er—oh very much upset indeed! [*Peter mumbles something.*] We—er—had no expectation of—er—the little matter—last night.

PETER. [*With no idea at all what he is talking about.*] No, of course.

BOOTS. [*Bitterly.*] There's no time card on earthquakes.

MR. PAYNE. No,—er—I suppose not— But—well—we're leaving by the first train, Mr. Deremy, and—er—so I thought—

PETER. [*Seething with impatience.*] Oh, yes! Yes, I see. Well—I— [*With great enthusiasm.*] I hope you have a pleasant trip.

MR. PAYNE. Yes—er—thank you. We have decided—er—to look things over in—in Florida. [*He sighs.*]

BOOTS. They have tidal waves and hurricanes down there.

MR. PAYNE. Yes, er—I believe so.

BOOTS. And what are you going to do with Spindrifft, Mr. Payne?

MR. PAYNE. [*Startled.*] I—er—I beg your pardon.

BOOTS. [*Advancing with flashing eyes.*] You bought it, didn't you? You passed your word. Well, you can't crawl out of it just because your wife happens to change her mind.

MILDRED. [*Horrificed.*] Boots!

MR. PAYNE. But my dear young lady, I—er—did not agree to buy the place. I—er—appeal to Mr. Doremy.

PETER. [*Hastily and hazily.*] Really I—I don't know.—But he'd have no use for it in Florida.

BOOTS. [*Wildly.*] But he did, Peter. You know he did. If you want him to make a fool out of you, all right. But I've got my living to earn and I want my money.

MR. PAYNE. If you'll listen to me—er—just a moment—

BOOTS. What did Peter sign last night? Answer me that!

MR. PAYNE. He signed an agreement to sell. [*He takes the paper from his pocket and hands it to her.*] There was no agreement to buy.

BOOTS. Then it wasn't fair. You tricked him.

MR. PAYNE. Tricked him?—I—er—gave him my check for five thousand dollars.

PETER. Oh, yes, so you did!—I'd quite forgotten it. [*He takes the check from his pocket and holds it out.*]

MR. PAYNE. There, young lady, you see?

BOOTS. [*Bitterly.*] Yes, I see.

PETER. [*Impatiently.*] Your check, Mr. Payne—your check.

MR. PAYNE. [*Backing away.*] But that is—er—your property, Mr. Doremy.

PETER. But you're not buying Spindrift.

MR. PAYNE. No. But the check, you see, is forfeited.

PETER. [*Blankly.*] Forfeited?

BOOTS. Certainly. It's yours, Peter. Put it in your pocket.

PETER. Oh, no! I couldn't think of it. [*And he presses it upon MR. PAYNE who puts his hands behind his back.*]

BOOTS. [*Shrilly.*] Don't be a fool, Peter.

PETER. [*Desperately.*] But I can't keep it, don't you see?

MR. PAYNE. I—er—am afraid you must.

PETER. [*Shaking his head like a bewildered bull.*] No,—No. [*He looks from one to another of the faces grouped around him.*] Well— [*And suddenly he tears the check to fragments.*]

BOOTS. [*Protesting shrilly.*] Peter! Oh, God! [*She groans and sinks down on the stool at the end of the table, the picture of despair.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Mumbling.*] Really I—embarrassed—er—sense of—obligation—er—hum—

MILDRED. But Peter, I don't understand. What about the house?

PETER It—it's all right.

MILDRED. You mean it's ours? We're going on?

PETER. Yes. [*He takes a deep breath.*] Going on. [*He backs away to the steps.*] I— Excuse me— Some work— [*He darts up the steps and resumes his interrupted occupation.*]

MILDRED. Well, I don't know—Everything is so mixed up. I don't see how things can ever straighten out again. [*She sighs. MR. PAYNE murmurs something.*] Everything in the house is upside down. Such a mess! And of course that chimney has all to be built again. [*She squints in critical reflection.*]

BUNNY. [*From the grill.*] The toast is ready.

MILDRED. Oh, yes! [*She starts for the grill.*] You must have some breakfast, Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE. Er—thank you. [*He sits down stiffly on the bench.*]

[*The characters are now disposed as follows: OLD PETER painting on the terrace, MILDRED and BUNNY busy at the grill, ELLEN in the swing, YOUNG PETER on the stool at the end of the table toward the grill; MR. PAYNE has just seated himself at YOUNG PETER'S right; at the opposite end of the table BOOTS; KONRAD has just crossed to her with his chest out and his head high and will seat himself at the far end of the long bench at BOOTS' left hand.*]

YOUNG PETER. [*Pleasantly.*] Good morning.

MR. PAYNE. [*Starting violently.*] Oh! [*He turns his head.*] Dear me!— You—you've been in an accident.

YOUNG PETER. [*Carelessly.*] Oh, no! A stone from the chimney fell on me, that's all.

MR. PAYNE. [*Vaguely aghast.*] Dear me!—Dear me! [*He faces to the front again, tapping his fingers together.*]

ELLEN. Boots!

BOOTS. [*Turning her head.*] Yes?

ELLEN. [*With faint exultation in her voice.*] I suppose now you won't be going on that trip.

BOOTS. [*Drearily.*] No— My ship has sunk.

ELLEN. I was just thinking— I might take your reservation off your hands.

BOOTS. [*Startled.*] You?

ELLEN. Yes. I'm going to go somewhere.

BOOTS. Oh! Well, you're welcome to it. [*She laughs harshly.*]

ELLEN. Thanks. [*And she sinks back in her corner again with a not unpleasant sigh, and closes her eyes. And BOOTS turning her head with a shrug looks straight into KONRAD'S smiling eyes. She stares at him for a moment in surprise. There is something in his face that puzzles her.*]

BOOTS. [*Bitterly.*] See what an earthquake does! My plans, my hopes, my life turned upside down.

KONRAD [*Smiling.*] So?—Everyone has troubles, Boots.

BOOTS. Yes, and I've got mine and someone's else, and by God! They've sunk me.

KONRAD. No, don't say that. So many times I've felt like that myself. But things come out— They always *have*. [*She leans with her elbows on the table studying him.*] Now I am just thinking— [*He strokes his beard, glances cautiously to the right, and left, leans so near her that she draws back a little, and goes on in a lowered voice inaudibly. For a few moments BUNNY has been looking at MR. PAYNE with a calculating expression in her eyes. Now she marches up to him in a determined manner.*]

BUNNY. Mr. Payne!

MR. PAYNE. Oh!—I beg your pardon. [*And he scrambles to his feet.*]

BUNNY. I believe you have a business of some kind in New York.

MR. PAYNE. Er—yes— It's in New Jersey— It's—er— glue.

BUNNY. Glue?

MR. PAYNE. Er—yes—a glue factory. We make it out of bones and things.

BUNNY. Oh!

MR. PAYNE. But—er—I'm not active now. [*He sighs.*] My boys run it.

BUNNY. But you've still got something to say about it, haven't you?

MR. PAYNE. [*Without conviction.*] Oh, yes!—Yes.

BUNNY. [*After a moment's calculation.*] Mr. Payne, I'm going to ask a favor of you. [MR. PAYNE *mumbles something.*] I want you to give my husband a position in your business.

[YOUNG PETER *stands up, amazement in his eyes.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Incredulously.*] Your husband? [*She nods.*] A position in my business? [*She nods.*] But— [*And he turns his head and stares at KONRAD'S back.*]

BUNNY. Oh I see!—But that is not my husband, Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE. [*Gasping.*] I—I beg your pardon.

BUNNY. Oh, no! That was just a—er— [*Brightly.*] a little misunderstanding.

MR. PAYNE. [*Groggily.*] Oh!

BUNNY. [*Taking YOUNG PETER'S hand.*] This is my husband.

MR. PAYNE. [*Staggering slightly.*] Oh! [*And he mumbles something which sounds like.*] Er—very interesting. [*And takes out his händkerchief and mops his brow.*]

BUNNY. I suppose it is a bit confusing.

MR. PAYNE. Oh, no!—Er—not at all. [*He stares at YOUNG PETER.*] But I thought he was going to be a painter.

BUNNY. Yes, he was, but—he's changed his mind, [*Turning to YOUNG PETER.*] Haven't you, dear?

YOUNG PETER. [*Vaguely.*] Why—yes.

MR. PAYNE. Hum— Well I couldn't offer him anything—er—very interesting, that is to start with.

BUNNY. [*Eagerly.*] Just a job, Mr. Payne—a job.

MR. PAYNE. [*Considering.*] Hum—

BUNNY. Something that won't wear away his heart and soul; something he can whip. A job his own size. Don't you see what I mean?

MR. PAYNE. [*Very vaguely.*] Why—er—yes, I—I believe I do.

BUNNY. Well?

MR. PAYNE. Yes—er—very happy—I'll write my son—He'll find a place.

BUNNY. [*From the bottom of her heart.*] Thanks! [*She grips his hand.*]

MILDRED. [*Putting down a plate and cup on the small table near the grill.*] Your breakfast, Mr. Payne.

MR. PAYNE. Oh, yes!—Er—pardon me. [*And he goes to the table and sits down, and will in due course dispose of his breakfast with apparent satisfaction.*]

BUNNY. [*Triumphantly.*] There!

YOUNG PETER. [*With an expression of horror on his face.*] But glue, Bunny!—Glue!

BUNNY. [*Lightly.*] You can hold your nose, dear. [*She turns to the grill, and YOUNG PETER sits down.*]

MILDRED. [*Crossing to ELLEN with a cup and plate. Over her shoulder.*] Your coffee's ready, Konrad.

KONRAD. So? [*He waves his arm and laughs.*] I don't need it now. [*And he goes on talking to BOOTS, gaily with the manner of a cavalier, tilting his head this way and that and gesturing with his hands; and BOOTS, with her hands locked on the edge of the table seems hanging on his words.*]

MILDRED. Ellen, dear! Breakfast! [*ELLEN opens her eyes and shakes her head.*] But you must eat, my child. You simply must. [*She puts the food down in the swing.*]

ELLEN. [*Forlornly.*] I have no appetite. It doesn't seem as though I ever should—again.

MILDRED. My poor child—

FRANCIS. [*Outside and shouting lustily.*] Hello!—Hello!—I say, Hello! [*And he breezes in, immaculately dressed in knickers and radiant hose and sweater.*] Good Lord! I say, look here, what's going on? [*He stares in amazement.*] Are you having-a convention? [*No one except MILDRED takes any notice of him.*] My electric plate's burned out or something. I thought I'd just come over for a bite.

MILDRED. The earthquake's broken all the wires.

FRANCIS. [*Roaring with mirth.*] Look here, don't be silly! What an idea! Earthquake?—Fancy!

MILDRED. [*Drearily.*] Look! There's the chimney. [*She points to the scattered stones.*]

FRANCIS. [*Impressed but unconvinced.*] Good Lord!—Well, of course, but see here, I just got up. You—you're not joking, Mildred.

MILDRED. It fell on Mariana and—and killed her. [MR. PAYNE *drops his knife and fork and stares, and murmurs to himself "Dear me! Dear me!"*]

FRANCIS. [*Stupidly.*] Mariana?—Killed?

MILDRED. [*Rather pleased with the sensation.*] And Mr. Witbeck is dead too.

FRANCIS. What?

MILDRED. Hush! There's Ellen over there. [*And ELLEN by the way has found some appetite, is picking daintily at the food, and will in due time consume the most of it. She adds in a whisper.*] He killed himself. No one knows why.

FRANCIS. I'm dazed. I'm simply stunned. I just got up you see. Well, I went to bed last night, and look what's happened! It simply isn't safe to shut your eyes.—Mariana— [*He shakes his head.*] Only think of that!

MILDRED. [*Almost smacking her lips.*] Um—Um— [BUNNY *crosses from the grill to YOUNG PETER with a dainty breakfast on a tray.*] She's married too.

FRANCIS. Married?

MILDRED. [*Nodding solemnly.*] To Peter.

FRANCIS. [*Gasping.*] Peter!—Good God, have you gone mad?

MILDRED. Young Peter. [*He presses his hands to his temples and stares at her.*] My boy, Francis. [*Her voice falters.*] He's just a baby, Francis—and now she's married him. I've no more to say about him than that chair. She's simply taken charge of everything. I'm nothing any more—just nothing.

FRANCIS. But Konrad—[*She points, and they both turn their heads to look.*] Good Lord!—Good Lord!—Good Lord!

MILDRED. And oh, yes! we sold Spindrift, Francis.

FRANCIS. Sold?—Sold Spindrift?

MILDRED. Yes. But on account of the earthquake they wouldn't take it, and we got it back. [FRANCIS *blinks his eyes.*] We were going to Paris you see, but of course now everything is changed. Really I don't know what we'll do about anything.

FRANCIS. Where's Peter? [*She points.*] Ah!—Fiddling while Rome burns. [*He turns away, looks about for some place to sit down, and settles on the chair across from MR. PAYNE.*]

MILDRED. I'll get you some breakfast, Francis. [*She starts toward the grill. He shrugs his shoulders, sighs deeply, and sits down. MR. PAYNE murmurs something. There is a long pause.*]

FRANCIS. [*Abruptly, to no one in particular.*] She was going to Mass this morning.

MR. PAYNE. [*Dropping his fork.*] I—er—I beg your pardon.

FRANCIS. [*Looking at him absently.*] Mariana—I say she was going to Mass this morning.

MR. PAYNE. [*Doubtfully.*] Oh!

FRANCIS. [*Musing aloud.*] That's funny, isn't it?—She was going to Mass this morning, do you see?—To Mass— Well, of course, why not?—But that's not the point, not at all. We *weren't* going and—here we are. She *was* going and—where is she? [*He spreads out his hands with a tremendous shrug.*] Well there you are!—A dismal commentary on the grace of God.

MR. PAYNE. [*Completely at sea.*] Er—very interesting.

FRANCIS. Well, of course—of course. Fascinating, don't you see? One *should* be able to make something out of that—the—the morbid irony—hum— [*He breaks off, gnawing at his knuckles.*]

MR. PAYNE. Yes, er—I should think so.

[BUNNY is perched on the edge of the table at YOUNG PETER'S left watching him eat with almost maternal satisfaction.]

MILDRED. [*Setting a cup and plate at FRANCIS' elbow.*] Here's your breakfast, Francis.

FRANCIS. Thanks. [*But he goes on brooding without noticing the food. And now MR. WATTS strolls into view, his canvas satchel in his hand, and his old felt hat pulled down over one eye.*]

MR. WATTS. [*Drawling amiably.*] Morning folks. [*He takes off his hat and puts it on again.*] Morning, Mrs. Doremy.

MILDRED [*Pleased.*] Why it's Mr. Watts! [*And she hurries to meet him at the center.*]

MR. WATTS. Just thought I'd drop by and see how that chimney got along. [*He looks for it. Cheerfully.*] Well, sir, now she did fall down, didn't she?

MILDRED. It fell on Mariana, Mr. Watts, and killed her.

MR. WATTS. Pshaw! Now that's too bad, ain't it? [*He shakes his head.*] Nice girl, Mariana, and she had a right good voice too. Not trained of course, but—kind of nice quality. [*He sighs pleasantly.*] Well—

MILDRED. I don't see why it fell, Mr. Watts. None of the others did.

MR. WATTS. Well now, Mrs. Doremy, that's pretty hard to say. Cement ain't what it used to be and—well I'll tell you what: it's pretty hard to count on anything these days.

MILDRED. [*Doubtfully.*] Well, I don't know—

MR. WATTS. But we can build her up again. Yes ma'am. [*He chuckles.*] Things may knock 'em down, but we can always build 'em up. That's the way she goes. That's life I say.

MILDRED. [*Absently.*] Yes. [*Her eyes on the roof of the house.*] I think perhaps we can do something a little more interesting this time.

MR. WATTS. Whatever you say, ma'am. I'm here to carry out your orders.

MILDRED. [*Enthusiasm mounting in her voice.*] It was too severe,—too sharp in line. We must start it much wider at the ground. Have you got a piece of chalk?

MR. WATTS. Yes ma'am. [*And he opens the canvas bag and produces chalk and a bit of cardboard.*]

MILDRED. I'll show you what I mean. [*And she begins to sketch something on the board.*] Something like this—

MR. WATTS. [*Peering over her shoulder.*] Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

[*And now FRANCIS, with a great shrug, appears to dismiss his mood. He takes a piece of toast and levels it at MR. PAYNE.*]

FRANCIS. [*In his normal boisterous voice.*] I've had an idea in my head.

MR. PAYNE. [*Jumping nervously.*] I—er—beg your pardon.

FRANCIS. An idea for a play—a South Sea thing. [*He takes a large bite of toast and munches it.*]

MR. PAYNE. Oh!—I once saw a play—I think they called it "Rain"—er—

FRANCIS. Well, of course, of course—Hokum and hula

girls!—Ha—ha—ha! [*And he laughs with great gusto.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Confused.*] Oh!—I—I didn't know.

FRANCIS. [*Indulgently.*] Well, of course that's quite all right. But look here, what I mean, I simply won't do that cheap conventional stuff. "Rain," "White Cargo," "The Bird of Paradise"—hokum—my dear sir—false to the core.

MR. PAYNE. I—er—don't go to the theatre much.

FRANCIS. [*With a fine gesture.*] That doesn't matter. Look here, you'll understand: I'm a dramatist, an artist I hope, and I have to get at the truth, the elemental and primordial facts of life, if you know what I mean.

MR. PAYNE. [*Very vaguely.*] Oh, yes!—er—yes.

FRANCIS. Of course. Well, there's a play down there—in the South Seas. Nobody's found it yet. But I think I'll take a trip down there and dig it out.

[*BUNNY bends her head to press a kiss on YOUNG PETER'S forehead. MILDRED is sketching and explaining at a great rate. KONRAD leans even closer to BOOTS who no longer tries to lean away. ELLEN is eating with an excellent appetite. And PETER is painting at full speed.*]

MR. PAYNE. [*Mumbling.*] Er—very interesting.

[*The curtain begins to descend.*]

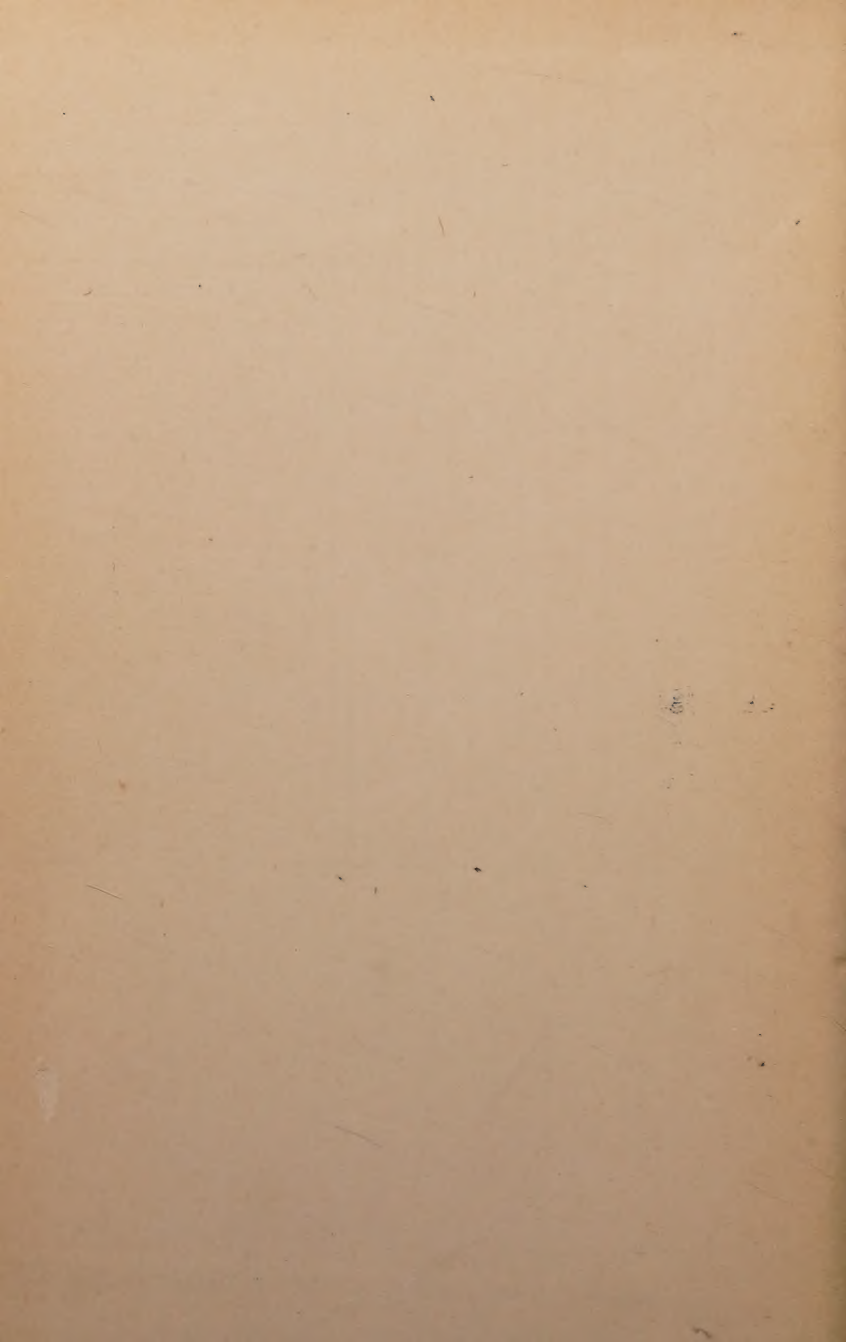
FRANCIS. [*Taking another piece of toast and waving it about.*] Well of course, of course. We've got to get at the truth, you see,—motives,—the fundamental things.

[He picks up his cup. Toast in one hand, coffee in the other, he gestures with tolerant good nature.] In a place like this a man is buried. He gets into a rut. And an artist must have contacts—contacts—

[The curtain reaches the stage.]

END OF ACT THREE

FINIS



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PS 3511 .L36 S6 1930

Flavin, Martin, 1883-

Spindrift

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